

Saint John Houghton Catholic Voluntary Academy

Abbot Road, Kirk Hallam, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 4HX

Inspection dates

15–16 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders have responded positively to the weakness identified at the last inspection and the recommendations from the monitoring visit. Their actions have begun to secure good leadership at all levels and effective teaching. They have been well supported by the executive headteacher.
- The St Ralph Sherwin Multi-Academy Trust (the trust) has provided the impetus, challenge and support to help the school to secure rapid improvements.
- As a consequence, pupils' progress has improved and continues to do so in Year 10 and in key stage 3.
- Pastoral leadership is strong through the new house system. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site.
- The broad and balanced curriculum reflects the needs of pupils.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is good. Middle leaders are consistently challenged by the leadership team. They now have greater responsibility for the provision in their area.
- The quality of teaching has improved. Most teachers use strong subject knowledge to plan clear sequences of learning. However, in some subjects, teachers give insufficient guidance for pupils in how to improve their work and provide fewer opportunities to work independently. This hinders the progress that pupils make.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development reflects the school's core ethos. Pupils are confident and embrace the opportunity to offer service for the school and wider community.
- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make better progress. However, there are still some differences between the progress made by these pupils and other pupils nationally.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils know how to keep safe; they have someone to talk to and feel supported.
- The new governing body, supported by the trust, has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors challenge and support leaders effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of subject leaders so that the changes effected by the leadership team continue to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning and reduce variability between subjects
 - ensuring that the new attendance strategies lead to sustained improvement in pupils' rates of attendance.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that is it consistently good throughout the school by ensuring that teachers:
 - encourage pupils to better articulate their understanding of what is being learned in lessons, through discussion
 - provide feedback to pupils that is consistently in line with the school's policy, so that pupils know how to refine and improve their work
 - have consistently high expectations and set work that meets the needs of all pupils, including the most able, so that they become independent and resilient learners.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher provides strong moral leadership reflecting the values and ethos of the school. These values are shared with and understood by the school community. The headteacher is supported by an executive headteacher who has the drive and the vision to help the school make rapid and sustained progress.
- The trust, which was newly constituted in September 2018, has provided thorough support for the school through its strategic leadership, clear improvement strategies and extensive training opportunities provided for the middle leaders.
- Consequently, middle leaders have been able to assume much greater responsibility for the provision in their areas, helping to drive improvements, especially in science and mathematics. The middle leaders have embraced the opportunities to develop their teams. However, there is still some work to be continued to ensure that all middle leaders are having the same positive impact on progress.
- Work is monitored with much greater rigour, led by the deputy headteacher. Teachers now feel that there is greater clarity about what is expected of them and teaching has improved.
- Staff morale is high and teachers say that they are proud to work at the school. They have been very positive about the changes. However, there is a need to ensure that new systems, especially in behaviour management, are consistently applied.
- There has been a thorough review of the curriculum and the school has now put in place a curriculum that reflects the needs of the local area and provides greater opportunity for pupils to move on to the next stage of their education.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils receive a good education at key stage 3. The broad and balanced curriculum provides pupils with the opportunity to deepen their understanding throughout the first three years in the school.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about British values of justice, the rule of law and democracy. For example, pupils are fully involved in elections for head boy and head girl, including presentations during assemblies. Leaders promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, especially through the religious education curriculum, the house programme and the personal, social and health curriculum. Pupils learn about equal rights and the negative impact and difficulties arising from stereotyping.
- Leaders have ensured that funding for disadvantaged pupils is well spent. Pupils have made rapid progress and they are beginning to more closely match the outcomes of similar pupils from different starting points. As staff become more familiar with barriers to learning they are able to better evaluate the impact of the spending.
- The additional funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is used well. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has ensured that staff know the individual pupil's needs thoroughly. His strategic and operational leadership, supported by leaders, means that teachers know how to provide for pupils in lessons. Pupils are making much-improved progress.

- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are positive about the school.

Governance of the school

- The majority of governors are new in post since September 2018.
- The experienced chair of governors ensures that governors receive training from a wide variety of sources to help better carry out their roles.
- The highly committed governors are beginning to better understand the school's strengths and priorities for further improvement. They are fully engaged in trust-level monitoring of key areas of the school development plans.
- Each governor has a designated link to the school. This provides the opportunities for regular meetings to discuss improvement plans. This helps to ensure that they are kept up to date.
- As governors become more familiar with their roles, they are becoming more able to hold the school to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding lead is well supported by her team. They work closely together and ensure that all actions are undertaken in a timely manner. They are aware that their pupils come from a wide area. As a result, they keep up to date with safeguarding arrangements across four counties.
- Staff training is comprehensive and updated annually. All staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues and understand their responsibilities. Staff use the electronic recording system well in order to take prompt action when they have concerns about a pupil's well-being or safety.
- The Emmaus Centre within the school offers a safe environment in which specialist staff are able to provide nurturing support for those pupils in need.
- There is a culture of safeguarding that permeates the school. Pupils say that they feel safe and know that they have someone they can talk to if they need support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Middle leaders now have much greater responsibility for leading their areas. They hold teachers to account much more closely and have helped them to plan work in a more ordered and consistent way.
- The teaching of mathematics and science is rapidly improving. Relatively new heads of faculty understand where there were areas of need. They have worked hard to meet these needs.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use to provide a solid foundation for learning. Where lessons are well planned, teachers clearly explain and demonstrate, helping pupils to understand.
- For example, in year 7, pupils were actively engaged in lessons as a result of effective

questioning by teachers and a clear sequence of learning that had developed from previous lessons. Higher-ability pupils felt that they were challenged in their learning.

- The majority of teachers have high expectations of what pupils are able to achieve. They use assessment data to help plan challenging lessons. However, in some cases, because the lessons are not fully stretching pupils they are not able to reach these challenging targets.
- Through the support of middle leaders, teachers now more skilfully use questioning to help pupils extend their thinking. For example, in English, inspectors saw teachers plan very effective revision sessions in which they checked for understanding and extension in order to better understand challenging concepts. These skills were also seen in other subjects, particularly in geography and science.
- Teachers care about their pupils who value this and feel very well supported. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. There were times when pupils were very quiet in lessons and were not able to develop ideas through discussion. However, work in books shows that they do have a clear understanding of what they are learning.
- Teachers do not consistently apply the school's assessment and feedback policies. This means that pupils are not always given the opportunity to reflect on and improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The new house system has brought together pupils from all years. Pupils enjoy the responsibility of being in mixed-age groups. These groups have encouraged pupils to talk and to listen to each other. The older pupils mentor the younger ones.
- Leaders give pupils many opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being prefects and campaigning to be head boy and head girl.
- Personal, social and health education is delivered through a dedicated team of staff who have developed a comprehensive curriculum. Areas explored include being safe online, diversity and mental health.
- Pupils are aware that there are a range of reasons for bullying. On the rare occasions that bullying occurs it is dealt with quickly and fairly. Pupils know where to go if they have problems.
- Pupils understand diversity. They are aware that people have different beliefs and cultures. The school strives to integrate pupils of all faiths and backgrounds to understand the Catholic context of the school. Pupils from other faiths are given additional transition time.
- Pupils receive high-quality careers advice and guidance. This ensures that they are ready for the next stage of their learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- There is a new behaviour and rewards system. Leaders have communicated clear expectations to pupils and staff. In the small number of lessons where a few pupils were not as keen to meet these expectations it was as a consequence of inconsistent application of the policy.
- Conduct around school is good. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere around the school and between lessons. Pupils socialise well together during break and lunchtime. For example, many pupils welcomed inspectors and other visitors who were on site and spoke to them as well as holding open doors.
- Pupils are punctual to lessons and move promptly to lessons after break and lunchtime. Pupils bring their own equipment, and this helps lessons to start purposefully.
- Occasionally, when planning for teaching does not meet pupils' needs, some pupils, mainly boys in key stage 3, lose concentration and cause low-level disruption. Where this occurred, most teachers used the school behaviour system to manage this effectively. In the small number of lessons where it went unchallenged, pupils did not learn as effectively as they should.
- Fixed-term exclusions have risen in 2018/19 after a decline in the previous year. The rise was as a result of the introduction of the new behaviour policy. As pupils have become more familiar with the higher expectations, the rate of fixed-term exclusions in the spring term are now similar to the previous year.
- The reflection room is used well to intervene with pupils before they risk having a fixed-term exclusion. As a result, very few pupils receive more than one exclusion.
- Leaders have strengthened the leadership of attendance since January 2019. Following the new role given to an assistant head there has been a sharper, more strategic approach to monitoring and improving attendance.
- Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. However, for all groups other than pupils with SEND, attendance has declined in 2018/19. The school is aware of the reasons for this decline and the attendance leader has had a significant impact since his appointment.
- Through the intervention of the SENCo and the strategic leadership of attendance, the attendance of pupils with SEND has improved significantly and is now above national averages for all pupils.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils attending school regularly has improved since January 2019 as a result of the targeted intervention by the attendance team, including home visits. However, it is still below national averages although improving at a rapid rate.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The proportion of pupils attaining a standard pass and above in both English and mathematics GCSE examinations was above the national average over the last two years of the reformed qualifications.

- Outcomes have improved for the majority of groups in the school. National data in 2018 indicated that pupils' progress from their starting points was below the national average. However, the progress made in 2018 showed a marked improvement over the previous year.
- School information, pupils' work and lesson observations show further progress for current pupils. Mathematics and science are making rapid improvements. This is because of the improvements made by leaders to the quality of teaching, better understanding of data and changes to the curriculum to strengthen outcomes.
- More pupils are now completing all aspects of the progress 8 indicator as a consequence of completing more examination entries following a review of the curriculum.
- Pupils make good progress in a number of subjects at key stage 4, including geography and business studies. They are making increasingly good progress across key stage 3.
- In 2018, middle-attaining and high-attaining boys underachieved in their examinations. Leaders' current assessment information and work in books indicates that boys are making stronger progress. However, there are still differences in the progress boys and girls make from their starting points. Leaders are aware that the progress of high-attaining boys still needs to be improved by providing more opportunities to access more challenging work.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils' progress was significantly below that of other pupils nationally. In 2018, following the introduction of a clearer plan, more focused teaching and more pupils entering more examinations, progress began to improve rapidly. Evidence from current assessment information and work in books indicates that this progress has been sustained. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is still below that of other groups in the school.
- Pupils with SEND are very well supported by the SENCo and his team. Effective, appropriate teaching strategies are shared with all teachers. Where a pupil has access to a teaching assistant, the teaching assistant's time is used well in lessons. As a result, pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The majority of pupils, in line with national averages, move on to further education, training or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	137908
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10087373

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Catholic voluntary academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	665
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Cathy Gabriel
Headteacher	Joan McCarthy
Telephone number	0115 932 2896
Website	www.st-johnhoughton.derbyshire.sch.uk
Email address	head@st-johnhoughton.derbyshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 March 2017

Information about this school

- This is a Roman Catholic voluntary-aided school.
- The school is part of the St Ralph Sherwin Multi-Academy Trust, founded in September 2018.
- The majority of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is lower than the national average although the proportion of pupils entitled to an education, health and care plan is higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 34 lessons, most jointly with senior leaders. They also visited form time and assemblies.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, executive headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of staff and governors. Inspectors also met with representatives of the trust.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and looked at a sample of pupils' books to evaluate their learning over time.
- Inspectors met with pupils in discussion groups, in their lessons and informally around the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including: safeguarding information; the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan; minutes of governors' meetings; trust reviews; information about the attainment and progress of all pupils and records relating to behaviour and attendance. Inspectors evaluated the school's pupil premium funding strategy.
- Inspectors considered the 123 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 103 free-text responses from parents. They also looked at questionnaires completed by parents at parents' evenings. They considered 58 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Paul Sweeney, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Alison Davies	Ofsted Inspector

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