

Inspection of St Monica's RC High School

Bury Old Road, Prestwich, Manchester, Lancashire M25 1JH

Inspection dates:

3–4 December 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and staff say that the school has improved significantly since the appointment of the new headteacher at the start of the year. The evidence gathered by inspectors supports their views. Leaders, including the interim executive board, have reviewed many areas of school life. They have taken brave decisions to bring about improvements, with the best interests of pupils at the heart of all their actions.

The behaviour of pupils around the school and in lessons has noticeably improved. Lessons are typically free from disruption. Behaviour during social times and when moving between lessons is calm and purposeful. That said, there remain a small minority of pupils who do not respond positively to the new behaviour policy. Pupils told us that they now enjoy coming to school more and that they feel safe in school. Pupils say that bullying is rare, and that staff will deal with any issues reported to them.

Across the school, leaders and staff have high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. The headteacher drives this culture of high expectations. He is unrelenting in his vision to improve the school so that all pupils get the highest-quality education. There is a wide range of clubs and activities available for pupils. They appreciate the opportunities to learn new skills or further develop their talents. Pupils at this school now get a much better deal.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher and the interim executive board (IEB) have worked tirelessly to improve this school. They have restructured leadership roles and personnel and have reviewed the pastoral support in the school. There has been a significant amount of staff turnover, but leaders have employed new staff who are contributing strongly to the positive improvements seen in all areas of school life. Pupils behave better and disruption to learning is considerably reduced. The proportion of pupils excluded from school is falling as pupils behave in more appropriate ways around the school and behave well in lessons. A small minority of pupils struggle to meet the high expectations of staff, but support is in place to help them to improve.

Leaders make sure that subject leaders focus on designing an improved curriculum. Subject leaders are now developing and implementing curriculum plans which are well thought out. These plans set out clearly what pupils need to be able to know, do and understand in each subject. The quality of planning is still variable within and across subject areas, as leaders are at different points in their journey of reviewing the curriculum. As a result, while the quality of education is improving across the school, some weaknesses in delivery remain. Sometimes, teachers do not make sure that teaching meets the needs of pupils well enough, especially for boys and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as others. Their needs are sometimes not met at the classroom level, despite changes to the leadership of this area. The identification of pupils' needs has improved, and training has been provided to staff on how to meet the needs of individual pupils. However, this is not yet making a positive difference to some pupils' experiences in lessons.

The achievement, progress and behaviour of boys remains a key priority for leaders and staff. Historically, boys have underperformed in many subject areas. Leaders now have a range of strategies to better support boys in their learning and attitudes. Current pupils are behaving well, achieving better and are becoming better prepared for their examinations and for life beyond high school. However, the attendance of boys needs to improve if they are to benefit from the better quality of education now provided by the school.

The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils is strong. Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to help pupils to overcome any barriers that they face. Interventions and support are bespoke and individualised so that pupils are supported and challenged to achieve well.

Leaders make sure that pupils have many opportunities to develop as well-rounded young people, grounded in the Catholic values of the school. Pupils are involved in a growing range of leadership activities, for example as student council members, prefects or library monitors. There are also many ways in which pupils can positively contribute to the local community or charities. For instance, some pupils have collected nearly 200 shoeboxes containing Christmas gifts for children in need of help.

Appropriate careers guidance helps to prepare pupils well for their next steps in education, employment or training. While staff work to raise aspirations of all pupils, disadvantaged pupils remain less likely to move on to high-quality destinations than others.

Leaders work with a diocesan teaching school and another local school who provide leadership support. They also support newly qualified teachers and staff new to the school. Staff morale has improved considerably. Staff appreciate the steps leaders are taking to be mindful of workload pressures. Relationships throughout the school are now strong. Leaders, staff and pupils now work together to continue the journey of improvement of St Monica's for the benefit of all.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know how to keep pupils safe. They are trained regularly and know pupils well. Staff are vigilant and know how to report any concerns. Pupils are confident to talk with staff if they have any worries. Leaders work well with a range of agencies to make sure that any pupils in need receive timely help and support. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the community. A new programme

for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education helps pupils to protect themselves, support others and make safe decisions for their health and futures. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of this new programme.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Senior leaders and subject leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum. However, leaders know that it is still early days in ensuring that all key stages in all subjects are planned effectively. The delivery of the curriculum is also variable within and across departments. Leaders need to continue their work on curriculum development and implementation so that pupils, including boys and pupils with SEND, learn more effectively over time. Boys and pupils with SEND need to achieve much better at the end of key stage 4.
- Leaders now make sure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified more effectively. However, some pupils still have significant gaps in their learning. Leaders need to make sure that any support plans in place are used effectively by teachers to make sure that learning is carefully planned so that individual pupils are able to access the curriculum effectively. Leaders should also ensure that the curriculum is successfully adapted when needed to meet the needs of all pupils.
- In the past, the PSHE programme has not been coherently planned. Leaders now provide opportunities for pupils to learn about personal development through a range of activities and events. Leaders need to ensure that this is planned and delivered in a systematic way.
- Too few disadvantaged pupils move on to high-quality destinations. Leaders' plans to further improve the quality of provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance are appropriate to increase the proportion of disadvantaged pupils going on to education, employment or training.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance have improved significantly from the previous inspection. Leaders need to make sure that the attendance of boys improves. Leaders and staff also need to continue to improve the learning culture so that pupils develop a thirst for success and contribute positively to the positive learning ethos in the school.
- Changes to leadership structures, responsibilities and staffing are now bringing about planned improvement. Leaders should build on these improvements to focus their actions sharply on embedding, developing and reviewing new systems and strategies. Additional support to enhance leaders' capacity to improve the school should continue to be used where necessary, for example to continue to support newly qualified teachers and the leadership of SEND provision.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	105366
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10115707
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,120
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	John Costello
Headteacher	Chris Foley
Website	http://www.stmonicas.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 January 2018

Information about this school

- The new headteacher joined the school in January 2019. There have been several changes to leadership and staffing since the previous inspection.
- The school currently uses alternative provision at EdStart, Park House, Spring Lane School and Elms Bank School to contribute to the education of a small number of pupils.
- The school's last section 48 inspection took place on 1 July 2019.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- During the inspection, we spoke with pupils about their work and other aspects of school life. We had meetings with subject leaders, senior leaders, teachers and other members of school staff. We also spoke with a representative from the local

authority and with four members of the IEB, including the chair of the IEB.

- The inspection focused deeply on English, mathematics, physical education and modern foreign languages. We met with subject leaders, visited lessons, met with teaching staff and pupils and looked at pupils' work. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection.
- We reviewed school documentation. This included curriculum plans. We also checked on documentation relating to governance and considered information about pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- We scrutinised a range of documentation about safeguarding and the checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- We considered the views expressed by parents in the 145 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. We also considered two letters from parents which were submitted to the lead inspector during the inspection. We also considered the views of staff by talking to them throughout the inspection and took into account the recent staff survey undertaken by leaders.

Inspection team

Helen O'Neill, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Denah Jones	Ofsted Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Nell Banfield	Ofsted Inspector

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