

Inspection of a good school: Blessed John Henry Newman Roman Catholic College

Broadway, Chadderton, Oldham, Greater Manchester OL9 9QY

Inspection dates:

8–9 January 2020

Outcome

Blessed John Henry Newman Roman Catholic College continues to be a good school. However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils typically enjoy their time at the school. They get along well with their peers and members of staff. They feel safe, well supported and cared for.

The new headteacher is ambitious for all pupils. This has led to staff increasing their expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. Despite this, the school's curriculum does not yet reflect this ambition. Although improving, the breadth and richness of some subject curriculums are at odds with leaders' expectations. This has limited the achievement of pupils who have left the school in recent years.

Pupils and staff told inspectors that pupils' behaviour has improved and that pupils mostly behave well. Inspectors saw pupils mainly behaving well during lessons. They also saw pupils conducting themselves in a sensible and courteous manner when moving around the school.

Bullying is rare at the school. When it does happen, members of staff go the extra mile to resolve issues and ensure that incidents do not reoccur.

The school welcomes all. The diversity of the pupil population is celebrated. Most parents and carers hold the school in high regard. They greatly value the many extra-curricular opportunities on offer, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Cadet Force.

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

The new headteacher has a clear understanding of what the school does well and what needs to improve. He has established an ethos in which staff and pupils are keen to be

'better than they were yesterday'. The staff are committed to increasing the breadth and ambition of the curriculum. However, there is significant variation in the quality of pupils' learning in different subjects. This has led to pronounced differences in pupils' achievement across subjects.

In some subjects, such as French and mathematics, teachers have thought deeply about what pupils should learn and the order they should learn it in. For example, French teachers skilfully develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of grammar alongside their vocabulary. In these subjects, teachers have worked together to consider the most effective ways to build pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers of mathematics, for example, are adept at helping pupils to understand complicated mathematical ideas using diagrams. This leads to pupils learning well and performing well by the time they leave the school.

In other subjects, such as art and design, history and geography, teachers have thought less about the content and order of their curriculums. These subjects lack ambition, particularly in key stage 3. They do not help pupils to build their knowledge systematically. Consequently, pupils' learning is often superficial, and their recall of prior learning is weak.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not learn as well as they should. This is because expectations of these pupils have been too low. Not enough attention has been paid to meeting their academic needs. In particular, pupils with SEND who do not have an education, health and care (EHC) plan do not make the progress of which they are capable.

The proportion of pupils being entered for the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) has declined in recent years. In 2019, only 12% of pupils were entered for the Ebacc. This is because, in the past, leaders did not value the contribution that modern foreign languages make to pupils' learning. Large numbers of pupils have been denied their right to study a modern foreign language. This is because they did not reach the expected standard in English and/or mathematics at the end of primary school. This practice has now stopped, although there are still a significant number of pupils in Years 8 and 9 who do not study a modern foreign language. The proportion of pupils studying the Ebacc has begun to rise.

Pupils benefit from a wealth of opportunities to enrich their learning. These opportunities help pupils to develop their character and broaden their horizons. For example, large numbers of pupils complete the Duke of Edinburgh Award. A vibrant range of opportunities also help to build pupils' cultural capital, such as recent theatrical productions of 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'Little Shop of Horrors'. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils take part in the full range of opportunities provided by the school.

The headteacher leads with integrity and has won the confidence of pupils, staff and the wider community. The school is now over-subscribed. There are fewer pupils joining the school at times other than the start of Year 7. Leaders show immense consideration for the well-being of staff. They have worked closely with staff to reduce workload. Levels of staff absence compare favourably to the national average.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. Staff undertake safeguarding training on a range of topics, from county lines to knife crime. They are vigilant to signs of abuse or neglect. They share a clear understanding of the safeguarding issues that are potentially more prevalent within the school's context.

Pupils' knowledge of different risks has improved. This is due to the recent introduction of a curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education in key stage 3.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are in the process of increasing the breadth, ambition and quality of the curriculum. Despite this, there remains huge variability in the quality of the curriculum in different subjects. This impacts negatively on pupils' learning and their achievement in external examinations. Leaders must therefore ensure that pupils benefit from ambitious and well-planned curriculums in all subjects. This will ensure that the headteacher's vision for the curriculum to 'leave no door closed' will become a reality.
- Leaders have begun to improve the academic support for pupils with SEND. However, this work is in its very early stages, and pupils with SEND do not learn or achieve as well as they should. Pupils with SEND who do not have an EHC plan have made particularly weak progress in recent years. Leaders should ensure that staff have high expectations of these pupils. They should also continue with their efforts to improve the academic support that these pupils receive. This should enable these pupils to learn well in a broad and ambitious curriculum that meets their needs.
- The proportion of pupils entered for the Ebacc has declined in recent years. This is because leaders had not valued the important contribution that modern foreign languages make to pupils' education. The attitude of leaders has now changed, and more pupils are now being entered for the Ebacc, because a greater proportion of pupils are opting to study French in key stage 4. Leaders should therefore take steps to further increase the popularity of modern foreign languages, so that the proportion of pupils being entered for the Ebacc continues to rise.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection

immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Blessed John Henry Newman Roman Catholic College to be good on 11–12 May 2016.

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 are the school and you are 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	136432
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10122052
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	1499
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mr Bernard O'Toole
Headteacher	Mr Glyn Potts
Website	http://www.newmanrc.oldham.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	11–12 May 2016

Information about this school

- The new headteacher was appointed in September 2018. Prior to becoming headteacher, he had worked at the school for many years.
- No pupils currently access alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- During the inspection, we spoke formally with pupils about their work and school life. We also spoke to pupils during lessons and around the school site. We held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders, governors and teachers, including those who are new to the profession.
- We reviewed documentation, which included leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- We considered the views expressed by parents in the 175 responses to Ofsted's survey Parent View, as well as the 51 comments received via the text facility and letters. We considered the 106 responses to the questionnaire for pupils and the 95 responses to the staff questionnaire.

- We focused deeply on mathematics, English, French, art and design, history and geography. In these subjects, we met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, met with teaching staff and looked at pupils' work.
- We reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding and spoke with staff to understand how pupils are kept safe. We also reviewed the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.

Inspection team

Will Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Woodhouse

Ofsted Inspector

Alison Stott

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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