

Inspection of a good school: Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School

Station Road, Bamber Bridge, Preston, Lancashire PR5 6PB

Inspection dates:

14–15 January 2020

Outcome

Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils are confident, full of life, and considerate of others. Pupils are known well and cared about. Pupils behave well and work hard in class.

Pupils said that they feel safe and can be themselves in this school community. Bullying almost never happens. It is sorted out quickly if it does.

Pupils said the wider curriculum is a strength of the school. It provides them many new experiences. Staff go out of their way to provide pupils with extra activities and school trips. Pupils use these opportunities to find out about the wider world and what they enjoy and are good at.

Staff help all pupils to access the curriculum equally. Most parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are full of praise for the school. They say their children receive excellent support from staff. They achieve well.

A new headteacher has recently been appointed. She and other leaders have very high aspirations for pupils. She quickly spotted some areas in key stage 3 where the curriculum did not match the higher standard seen elsewhere. The actions she and other leaders are taking is getting the curriculum fully up to speed.

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

The recently appointed headteacher is very clear about the school's strengths. She also sees the potential to improve the school further. She has wasted no time before addressing the few weaker areas that she inherited on her appointment.

The key stage 3 curriculum is under review. Some subjects are further on than others in making the necessary changes. Pupils already benefit from a well-designed curriculum in English and mathematics. Pupils learn all they need to know, in depth and with detail.

They are given frequent opportunities to apply their learning to new and bigger ideas. Curriculum plans have sometimes lacked these strengths elsewhere in key stage 3. This is especially in those subjects that pupils do not continue to study after making their option choices. Pupils have sometimes skimmed over or forgotten what they need to know. Leaders are taking action to rectify this situation.

The key stage 4 curriculum meets pupils' needs and, very often, sparks their interest. Curriculum planning does not overly focus on examination skills and practice questions. Instead, subject curriculums place emphasis on pupils' deep, wide and ambitious study. These plans are delivered well, by staff who provide subject expertise and enthusiasm. This helps pupils to learn well.

Pupils are offered academic, arts-based, technical and vocational courses at key stage 4. These courses match pupils' needs and interests. Many pupils choose to follow academic courses. More and more, these meet the requirements of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Leaders provide clear information to pupils who suit this academic route. Leaders make sure these pupils know of the EBacc's opportunities for further study and professional life.

Pupils develop as good and successful citizens. They learn how to contribute and make a difference to the world in which we live.

The headteacher has added impetus to the school's wider curriculum. Leaders support disadvantaged pupils' participation in the varied activities provided. This is paying dividends. More of these pupils take part in the many clubs, school productions, homework support and trips provided.

Pupils are very complimentary about staff. Pupils consider teachers as experts in their field. Pupils said that most lessons grab their attention. They appreciate the time that teachers put into planning thought-provoking activities. Pupils pay attention, try hard and behave well in lessons. This good behaviour extends beyond lessons. Pupils are happy and orderly between lessons, and at break and lunchtime.

Most pupils achieve well in their examinations, across almost all subjects. This includes pupils with SEND, who move on to well-chosen courses after Year 11. Disadvantaged pupils' examination results are improving year on year. However, they do not match those of others nationally.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school takes pupils' well-being and safety very seriously. Staff training is regular and up to date. Staff are vigilant. They know what to look out for if pupils are at risk, and how to deal with concerns. Leaders consult parents and refer cases to social care when necessary. They take the time to follow up on referrals and keep detailed records. Pupils have a clear understanding of risks or threats when online. Pupils know who to talk to or contact if they are worried or unhappy.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's key stage 3 curriculum does not yet provide sufficiently deep and ambitious coverage in some subjects. However, it is clear from the actions that leaders' have already taken to plan next year's curriculum that they are in the process of bringing about the improvements required.
- Most pupils do well in their examinations. However, a minority of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, achieve less well. Leaders should continue to strengthen and embed the actions which are improving pupils' achievement across subjects, especially for disadvantaged pupils, so that all pupils achieve highly.

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 Browndedge St Mary's Catholic High School to be good on 4–5 November 2015.

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	119784
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10087721
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	713
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Frances Fordyce
Headteacher	Mrs Nicola Oddie
Website	http://www.st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	4–5 November 2015

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Preston’s College, Shaftesbury High School and The Heights Free School.
- The school is part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2014.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders and governors. We spoke on the telephone to a representative of the Diocese of Salford and a representative of the local authority.
- We reviewed the school’s records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority. We spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe. We also asked the pupils about how they keep themselves safe and what to do if they have concerns.
- We considered the views of the 91 pupils who responded to Ofsted’s confidential questionnaire.
- We considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff and from the responses of 43 staff to the confidential questionnaire.

- The views of the 73 parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey, including the 34 free-text responses were considered. We also took account of the views expressed by a group of parents who met with inspectors.
- In considering the quality of education, we concentrated on art, English, French and history in depth. We discussed the arrangements for the curriculum and teaching with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. We visited lessons and then talked with pupils about what they had been learning. We looked at pupils’ exercise books and folders in these subjects.

Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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