

# Inspection of Saint Ambrose College

Hale Road, Hale Barns, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 0HE

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Inspection dates: 18–19 February 2020

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The previous 'outstanding' judgement reflected the school's overall effectiveness in July 2009 under the relevant inspection framework at that time.

The new judgement of 'good' reflects the current inspection framework as well as any changes at the school since the last inspection.

The school has not been inspected for 10 years, which is longer than the five-year maximum interval between inspections. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy coming to St Ambrose College. They understand the importance of the school mission statement to 'produce resourceful and resilient Ambrosians, equipped to make a positive impact in the modern world'. They are proud of their school.

Pupils are safe. Bullying is rare and dealt with well by staff. Pupils behave well in school. Pupils, particularly sixth-form pupils, are committed to the St Ambrose community. They help and support each other.

Most teachers have high expectations for pupils. Pupils achieve well in their examinations at the end of Year 11 and at the end of sixth form. They move on to appropriate destinations when they leave school.

Most pupils enjoy participating in the range of extra-curricular sports available. Many pupils go on to play their sports for high-profile clubs. Some pupils represent their country. The take-up for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at all levels is high.

Most pupils also participate in the many societies that are run by sixth-form students during lunchtimes. Pupils will speak and debate with others in the subject-specific societies. These societies help pupils to gain a deeper interest in many different subjects. They also encourage pupils to take an interest in topical issues.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for the curriculum. Most leaders understand this vision. There has been considerable change made to both the academic and personal development curriculum. However, leaders are aware that these changes are recent and incomplete.

Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve very well in school. The special educational needs coordinator ensures that teachers understand how to support pupils with SEND. These pupils achieve at least as well as other pupils in the school. They move on to appropriate further education, employment or training when they leave the college.

In most subjects, leaders have identified the key learning that pupils and students need to know. Leaders order the curriculum so that new knowledge builds on pupils' previous learning. In the sixth form, knowledge builds on students' learning from their GCSE examination courses.

Most subject areas are taught by subject specialists. Where this is not the case, leaders support these teachers in improving their subject knowledge. Department teams meet regularly to share good practice in order to improve their skills. Links

with other schools and subject-specific professional organisations help teachers to stay in touch with the latest research in their subject areas.

Teachers use assessment information effectively. They identify where pupils and students are having difficulty with their learning. Teachers use this information to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of learners. Learners achieve well in their studies. Attainment at the end of Year 11 and sixth form is well above other pupils nationally.

Despite improvements to the curriculum, some subjects do not cover the depth and breadth of the national curriculum at key stage 3. For example, in English pupils' reading of full texts does not extend to authors prior to 1914. Although they look at extracts from the work of authors such as Shelly, Shakespeare and Dickens, the lack of full texts does not allow pupils to gain an understanding of the language used at the time. They do not gain the knowledge of how the author creates the story over the course of the novel. Consequently, some pupils do not develop the knowledge and skills needed to access the texts that make up our literary heritage. This was clearly seen at key stage 4, where students struggled to study Shakespeare plays.

Pupils and students have developed personally through the well-developed wider curriculum. The experiences that these activities provide help pupils to develop resilience and independence. They learn to support others that are less fortunate than themselves. They develop their talents and interests beyond the academic. For example, pupils in the debating society were considering the question 'Should there be one world government?' Pupils of all ages, including pupils in Year 7, were considering how this would impact on people's lives in many different countries.

The personal development curriculum has not provided some pupils with meaningful opportunities to discuss how to become responsible and active citizens. Leaders have changed the structure of the curriculum. However, these changes are very recent, and it is too early to see their impact.

Pupils and students have a strong work ethic. The college is a calm and welcoming place to be. Pupils and students move purposefully to their classes. They are punctual to their lessons. Attendance is above the national average and few pupils are excluded by the school.

Staff are very supportive of leaders. They believe that leaders are considerate of their workload. They feel valued. They told us that leaders listen to them and consult with them before introducing any changes.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive safeguarding training annually. They are given updates when needed. Staff understand the main issues that affect their pupils and students. They

recognise the signs of a pupil in need of help and support. They act promptly to get them the help that they need.

Pupils and students know how to keep themselves safe. They understand the dangers of the internet, particularly social media sites.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Most subjects have a well-ordered curriculum. However, some subjects are not as well developed as others. The content of the curriculum plans for some subjects does not match the depth and breadth of the key stage 3 national curriculum. Some pupils are not fully prepared for learning to GCSE and beyond as a result. Leaders should continue with their plans to develop the curriculum. This will ensure that pupils and students receive a high-quality curriculum in all subject areas and that their learning matches the full ambition of the national curriculum.
- Inconsistencies in the personal development curriculum have resulted in some pupils not having opportunities to discuss the knowledge that they need at an age-appropriate level. The new personal development curriculum will ensure that pupils and students have opportunities to discuss issues at a level appropriate to their age. Leaders should continue with their plans to implement this curriculum. This will help all pupils to take their place as responsible and active citizens.
- The transition arrangements were used on this inspection to confirm that pupils benefit from a good-quality education.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138134
<b>Local authority</b>	Trafford
<b>Inspection number</b>	10122179
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1053
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Dr Peter Goodwin
<b>Principal</b>	Dermot Rainey
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-ambrosecollege.org.uk">www.st-ambrosecollege.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school was inspected under section 48 in April 2015.
- There are currently no pupils in alternative provision.

## 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.

- During the inspection, we spoke with pupils about their work and school life. We held meetings with trust leaders, senior leaders, governors, subject leaders and a representative from the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

- We reviewed documentation which included leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and the school development plan. We scrutinised information about pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- We considered the views expressed by parents and carers in the 228 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- We reviewed a range of documentation about the school. This included information about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff and support for pupils.
- During the inspection, we did deep dives in these subjects: English, science, geography and design technology. We met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, met with teaching staff and looked at pupils' work. We also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Erica Sharman, lead inspector

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