

Inspection of St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School

Boardmans Lane, Blackbrook, St Helens, Merseyside WA11 9BB

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and happy at this school. They said that everyone knows each other well. Pupils are confident that they could approach any member of staff for help and support with any concerns or problems. Most pupils treat each other with courtesy and respect.

Pupils are supportive of the considerable changes that leaders have made to the systems for managing behaviour. They said that staff use the behaviour system with more consistency. Teachers' expectations of how pupils behave have risen and there is less disruption to pupils' learning. Pupils described how leaders have tackled the use of derogatory language in school. They said that should derogatory language occur, then it is dealt with by staff.

Improvements to the leadership of the school mean that pupils are starting to learn more than they have in the past. Teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement are increasing. More pupils are receiving a better quality of education. Nevertheless, pupils, including those pupils who are disadvantaged, do not learn and achieve equally well across all subjects.

Pupils benefit from the wider opportunities on offer at the school. For example, pupils learn about issues such as age, disability and race. Pupils are appreciative of the programme of trips and activities available to them, such as drama club, sporting events or ice-skating.

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

For a short while, following the previous section 5 inspection, senior leadership at the school lacked consistency. This led to slow progress in addressing the weaknesses at the school. This situation has now been resolved. Current leaders, including governors, are ambitious for pupils. They are taking appropriate actions to accelerate the pace of improvement for pupils at the school.

Senior leaders have constructed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. It provides pupils with access to a suitably wide range of subjects, including the English Baccalaureate suite of qualifications.

Most subject leaders have worked closely with specialist leaders of education to design subject plans. There is no doubt that these plans identify the overarching topics that pupils will learn and the order that topics will be delivered. However, there are distinct differences in the quality of subject planning across the school.

Not all plans identify the exact subject knowledge that pupils must know and remember. Added to this, some plans do not provide teachers with sufficient guidance on the most appropriate activities to use when delivering new learning. As a result, pupils do not learn consistently well across all subjects. Teachers use

assessment strategies with increasing confidence to check that pupils are learning new knowledge.

In recent months, leaders have implemented a system to identify those pupils who find reading more difficult. They have started to provide some pupils with the support that they need to catch up. This is beginning to help these pupils read more accurately and fluently. This is especially the case for those pupils in the earliest stages of learning to read.

Leaders have appropriate mechanisms in place to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders supply teachers with appropriate information to help them support pupils with SEND in lessons. However, some teachers do not make best use of this information to adjust how they deliver the curriculum so that all pupils with SEND learn well.

Leaders are overhauling the quality of pupils' behaviour for the better. They have introduced new ways to deal with incidents of poor behaviour. Staff and many pupils have embraced these changes. As a result, relationships between pupils and staff are much stronger. However, some pupils continue to cause low-level disruption in certain lessons. This impacts on the learning of their peers. Leaders have worked purposefully to ensure that pupils attend school regularly.

Leaders have taken appropriate steps to strengthen pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Leaders have built a curriculum to meet their needs and to reflect the local community. However, not all pupils, particularly those pupils in older year groups, have fully benefited from the PSHE provision that has recently been put in place. However, all pupils benefit from a suitable careers programme.

Governors have strengthened the ways in which they challenge leaders about the quality of education that the school provides to pupils. They have supported leaders to improve behaviour and to address the offensive language that some pupils used in the past.

Staff say that leaders take action to consider and address their workload and support them with their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive timely and relevant safeguarding training. Staff report any safeguarding concerns that they have, in a timely manner, using the appropriate safeguarding systems.

Staff are vigilant for signs of abuse or neglect. Where necessary, leaders escalate concerns to the local authority. Pupils, some of which are extremely vulnerable, receive the internal or external support that they need.

Safeguarding records are well maintained. Designated safeguarding leads have a clear oversight of these records. Leaders use the expertise of external partners to regularly review the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding practices.

The curriculum provides pupils with an up-to-date knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. Parents are also provided with regular safeguarding updates.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In certain subjects, some curriculum plans are still under development. Leaders are in the process of defining the essential subject knowledge that needs to be taught and/or the order in which it must be taught. Consequently, pupils do not acquire the rich body of academic knowledge that they should. They do not achieve consistently well. Leaders should finalise their curriculum plans for all year groups and roll out and embed these plans. This is so that all pupils learn and achieve as well as they should.
- Some subject leaders have not thought deeply enough about the most appropriate pedagogical activities required to successfully deliver the curriculum. This hinders how well pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEND, build up new knowledge, and how successfully they make the links between new and previously taught subject content. Leaders should ensure that teachers are given sufficient guidance so that they choose learning activities that help pupils to remember and embed new subject knowledge as they progress through the curriculum.
- Currently, not all pupils read as proficiently and as often as they should. They have deficits in their reading knowledge and skills. As a result, they do not access and learn the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all pupils receive the support that they need to read accurately and fluently. This is particularly the case for pupils in Years 9 to 11. Leaders should ensure that all teachers are provided with further training to acquire the knowledge and expertise that they need to successfully support weak readers in lessons.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	104833
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10200806
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	557
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anne Moore
Headteacher	Giselle Lynch
Website	http://www.staughs.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	23 and 24 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School is a smaller than average secondary school.
- The school's last section 48 inspection took place in March 2019.
- The school makes use of a number of alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: art and design, English, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also reviewed aspects of the curriculum in geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and technology.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector also spoke with the school improvement partner and a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the Archdiocese of Liverpool. They also met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also considered the minutes of several governing body meetings.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding procedures, including checks made on staff. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, governors, staff and pupils to discuss wider aspects of safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. They also considered survey responses from staff, parents and carers, and pupils around safeguarding. An inspector also checked the arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including that relating to the curriculum, pupil behaviour, improvement plans and the self-evaluation summary.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their programme of wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Alyson Middlemass, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Woolley	Ofsted Inspector
Dean Logan	Ofsted Inspector

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