

Inspection of a good school: St James' Catholic High School

St James Way, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 6PZ

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 February 2022

Outcome

St James' Catholic High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending St James' Catholic High School. They feel happy and safe in school. They described it as being like a family.

Pupils are keen to learn and do well. They told inspectors that teachers help them whenever they need support. Staff expect them to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. Pupils achieve well.

Staff and leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are confident that any incidents of poor behaviour will be dealt with quickly.

Pupils are taught to respect and value one another. Pupils told inspectors that everyone is treated equally. Bullying is dealt with quickly and discrimination is not tolerated.

Pupils enjoy the variety of clubs and activities on offer at lunchtime and after school. For example, they can go to film or STEM club, join the equalities group, play in the band or take part in the school production. Many pupils play one or more of the recreational or competitive sports on offer.

The school council and prefects are actively involved in school life. Pupils told inspectors that their input leads to changes to the school for the benefit of all pupils.

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

Leaders and governors know the school well. They have put in place an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. As a result, more pupils in key stage 4 have chosen to follow the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects than was the case previously.

Curriculum leaders have identified the important knowledge they want pupils to learn. In some subjects, curriculums are particularly effective. Leaders have carefully ordered the

content that will be taught so that pupils know and remember more. In these subjects, pupils are able to draw upon the rich knowledge that they have learned over time to tackle complex tasks. Where this is the case, pupils achieve well.

Teachers understand how to help pupils learn and remember more. They regularly revisit content to check pupils' recall of important knowledge. Teachers use assessment strategies effectively to identify any misconceptions or lack of knowledge. They adapt the curriculum appropriately to address these weaknesses.

In a small number of subjects, leaders have not thought as clearly about how they can build pupils' knowledge over time. Teachers sometimes introduce too many ideas too quickly. As a result, pupils do not know and remember the same breadth of knowledge as they do in other subjects. This means that they achieve less well.

Most pupils read well. Leaders have identified that some younger pupils are finding reading more difficult. They have put in place a new reading programme to help them catch up quickly.

Leaders have effective procedures for identifying and assessing pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers ensure that access to the curriculum is adapted so that pupils with SEND learn well. Leaders are building closer working relationships with families to ensure that help is well tailored for pupils with SEND as their needs change.

Teachers know their pupils well. Pupils enjoy their learning and behave well in lessons. The school's values of family, faith and excellence underpin the warm relationships between staff and pupils.

Leaders ensure that the personal development curriculum is broad in scope and relevant to pupils. Form tutors are well supported to deliver the personal, social and health education programme. Pupils value learning about their rights and responsibilities and about healthy relationships. They told inspectors that they were given lots of help to make decisions about their next steps.

Staff told inspectors that they enjoy working in this school. Leaders take their workload and well-being into account when making decisions about school improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and alert to the possible risks that pupils may face. Staff report even the slightest concern that they have about a pupil. Leaders act quickly to identify the help that pupils need. They work with parents and carers and external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Leaders have recently employed more staff to help pupils, particularly those who need support with their mental health.

Pupils are taught about risks to their safety and how to avoid them. Staff are knowledgeable about current safeguarding issues. They ensure that pupils have relevant, up-to-date knowledge about how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not identified clearly enough the component knowledge pupils need to complete more complex tasks. As a result, pupils are sometimes asked to complete tasks without having the secure foundation knowledge they need to be successful. This means that they do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that they identify the component knowledge in these curriculum areas so that pupils can build their knowledge securely step by step.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

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	106142
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10212508
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	804
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Patricia Adams
Headteacher	Anthony Pontifex
Website	www.stjamesheadle.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a Catholic ethos. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in May 2017.
- A small number of pupils are educated through two alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, including the designated safeguarding leader and the director of SEND, middle leaders, teachers and members of support staff.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body of the school, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector also spoke with the local authority school improvement officer and the diocese school improvement officer.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, history and languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also met the leader of another subject to discuss the curriculum. She visited a sample of lessons in a range of subjects.
- The lead inspector met with the leaders responsible for safeguarding. She reviewed a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding, including the school's pre-employment checks on staff. Inspectors spoke to staff and pupils about wider aspects of safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes, at lunchtimes, in corridors and during lessons. They spoke with pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of their behaviour. Inspectors also discussed the school's programme of wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Stephanie Gill, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Nell Banfield

Ofsted Inspector

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