

Inspection of St Matthew's RC High School

Nuthurst Road, Moston, Manchester M40 0EW

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils are not happy at this school. They told inspectors that they do not feel safe due to the behaviour and attitudes of other pupils. Inspectors found that sometimes staff do not feel that they have the support from senior leaders to keep themselves, or pupils, safe from harm.

Leaders do not have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour. Some pupils said that leaders do not take their concerns seriously. Pupils are regularly exposed to fights and aggressive behaviour. Swearing and the use of derogatory language by pupils are commonplace.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times is poor. There are frequent disruptions to lessons. Pupils' unruly behaviour at social times prevents other pupils who are in lessons from learning.

Bullying is rife. Many pupils engage in racist, homophobic and misogynistic name-calling. During the inspection, inspectors observed a significant number of pupils who displayed no respect or tolerance for the differences between themselves and other people.

The personal development provision for pupils is new. Leaders have been slow to introduce effective provision that addresses the discriminatory behaviour that pervades this school. Pupils are not prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Across the school, in many subjects, pupils' achievement is poor. The curriculum is ineffective.

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

Pupils at this school do not achieve well and they are not safe. Leaders have done too little to tackle the wide-reaching weaknesses at the school. Many pupils engage in disorderly behaviour. Other pupils do not understand boundaries and they engage in harmful sexual behaviour. Supply teachers and newer staff find it challenging to manage pupils' disruptive behaviour. Some staff said that they are not always supported by senior leaders to manage pupils' outbursts. Leaders' safeguarding and behaviour records are unacceptably poor.

Some pupils' rates of attendance are poor, particularly disadvantaged pupils. Two-thirds of disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent from school. Leaders have been unsuccessful in addressing this serious issue. Added to this, a large number of pupils are considerably late to school. Inspectors witnessed many of those pupils waiting in the late queue engaging in unacceptable behaviour.

Internal truancy rates are high. Many pupils choose to be late to lessons or to wander the building when they should be in class. Often staff do not challenge pupils who are out of lessons. When staff do offer challenge, some pupils are rude and defiant in response.

Leaders have updated their curriculum to ensure that all national curriculum subjects in key stage 3 are taught. However, in several subject areas, leaders have not designed the curriculum to cover sufficient subject content. This considerably limits how well pupils learn.

Pupils experience lessons that are jumbled and disconnected. Teachers are unclear about what they should be teaching pupils. This haphazard approach to delivering the curriculum means that pupils are missing the essential foundations that they need to learn well.

Leaders and teachers fail to identify the gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders' systems to assess pupils' learning are ineffective. Pupils who misbehave are routinely placed in separate rooms where they do not follow the same work as their peers. Periods in isolation cause a number of pupils to develop even wider gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding.

By the end of Year 11, pupils do not gain the standard of qualifications that they should. Pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not have the knowledge that they need to move on to appropriately ambitious post-16 courses.

Many pupils cannot read well enough to access the curriculum. Leaders have not created an effective programme of support to improve pupils' reading skills. A considerable number of pupils have missing phonics knowledge. However, leaders have not put suitable provision in place for those pupils who need the most support. Pupils' lack of ability to access the curriculum encourages them to truant from school, to avoid lessons or to misbehave.

Leaders have begun to put processes in place to identify and assess pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Currently, however, leaders are ineffective in supporting pupils with SEND to access learning. A lack of appropriate support means that these pupils struggle to access the curriculum. As a result, some pupils with SEND misbehave out of frustration and an inability to access learning in lessons. Their experience of education is poor.

Leaders are at the early stages of creating a personal development curriculum. However, many pupils do not currently take this aspect of their learning seriously. Pupils who spoke to inspectors openly shared their views that they do not value the personal development programme. Consequently, many pupils truant personal development lessons. Those that do attend do not learn the intended content in sufficient depth.

Leaders, governors and trustees have not demonstrated the capacity to improve the quality of education for pupils. Leaders, including governors, were aware of the

concerns that pupils had for their safety. However, they have not acted to resolve them. Pupils are being failed by leaders at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders' approach to safeguarding is lax. They do not have appropriate systems in place to safeguard pupils. Governors have not met their statutory duties to safeguard pupils or staff. Leaders are overwhelmed by their caseloads and safeguarding concerns. This means that they do not have the capacity to resolve issues or follow them up properly.

Pupils and staff are not safe in this school. Regular antisocial and dangerous behaviour puts pupils at considerable risk. Leaders do not protect pupils from harm. Many pupils do not follow instructions from staff, which creates a chaotic learning environment.

Teachers report their safeguarding concerns effectively; however, they are not acted on promptly or appropriately by leaders. Concerns that should be passed to other authorities are not always referred onto the appropriate bodies. Those concerns that leaders do share are not always followed through to conclusion. This puts pupils' safety and well-being at risk. It prevents pupils and their families from getting the help and support that they need.

Concerns raised by pupils who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community and those who are potentially vulnerable are not always taken seriously. This increases the welfare risks that they face. Very senior leaders are unaware of which pupils in the school require safeguarding.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders, governors and trustees do not safeguard pupils and staff. Many pupils do not report safeguarding and welfare issues to leaders because they said that they will not act. As a result, pupils and staff are put at risk of considerable harm. Leaders and governors must act immediately to safeguard and protect pupils and staff from harm. They must build a culture of safeguarding where it is safe to raise concerns.
- Leaders have not tackled the aggressive and dangerous behaviour that is exhibited by pupils towards their peers and towards some staff. Some pupils have homophobic, racist and/or misogynistic attitudes towards others. These pupils express their discriminatory views openly. This means that many pupils do not feel safe in school. Leaders must ensure that they tackle all aspects of pupils' poor behaviour. They must support staff and ensure that behaviour policies are applied consistently well.

- The personal development curriculum is ineffective. It is not embedded, nor is it valued by many pupils. An ineffective approach to pupils' wider personal development means that they do not understand how to treat each other or staff with respect. As a result, many pupils are discriminatory and are not prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders must ensure that the personal development programme is fit for purpose and that it prepares pupils to be citizens in modern Britain.
- Some pupils' rates of attendance are poor. Many pupils are late for school. Others truant from lessons. This is often because they cannot access their learning. As a result, pupils develop wide gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Leaders must improve pupils' rates of attendance and punctuality. They must ensure that pupils can access learning so that they find value in coming to school and attending lessons.
- The curriculum is ineffective, including for pupils with SEND. Pupils experience a disconnected series of lessons which lack structure. Pupils with SEND do not receive appropriate support. Consequently, pupils underachieve considerably. Leaders must design a curriculum that staff know how to teach. They must implement a curriculum that is coherent and that allows pupils, including those with SEND, to develop a deep and rich body of subject knowledge.
- Leaders' systems to assess pupils' learning are ineffective. Consequently, leaders do not know where pupils have gaps in their learning or where pupils have developed misconceptions. Leaders must introduce a coherent system to check how well pupils are learning new knowledge. Pupils have wide gaps in their reading knowledge. As a result, many pupils cannot access the secondary school curriculum. Leaders do not provide effective support to help these pupils to catch up with their reading. Leader must introduce a programme of support to help pupils to read confidently and fluently. This includes a phonics programme, when required.

Having considered the evidence, we strongly recommend that leaders and those responsible for governance do not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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.

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	148389
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10260928
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1304
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Catherine Anderson
Headteacher	Helen Murden
Website	www.smrchs.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Matthew's RC High School converted to become a sponsor-led academy in June 2021. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- This school has been part of the Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust since June 2021.
- The last section 48 inspection took place in June 2016.
- Leaders use three registered providers for alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspection was carried out following a number of complaints made to Ofsted that raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised.

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 as an urgent inspection without notice. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school had 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.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, history, English, science and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited some lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinators, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector also spoke with representatives of the Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust, the Diocese of Salford and the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with members of the local governing body and spoke with the chair of the trustees on the telephone.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding procedures, including the recruitment checks made on staff. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, staff and pupils to discuss wider aspects of safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including that relating to the curriculum, pupils' behaviour, improvement plans and leaders' 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 with pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their programme of wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents and carers to Ofsted Parent View. There were no comments submitted via the free-text facility.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Elaine Mawson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Cunningham	His Majesty's Inspector
Michael Pennington	His Majesty's Inspector
Ben Hill	His Majesty's Inspector
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Amanda Downing	His Majesty's Inspector

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