

Inspection of St Monica's RC High School, a Voluntary Academy

Bury Old Road, Prestwich, Manchester, Greater Manchester M25 1JH

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Monica's RC High School develop a strong sense of who they are and what they believe. They learn to debate issues, speak confidently and respectfully explore the views of others. Pupils work with staff to build positive relationships. They take on roles such as peer defenders and anti-hate crime ambassadors.

Leaders have prioritised the school's curriculum. They have high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils study a broad, ambitious curriculum which is designed and delivered well. They are inspired to aim high. Consequently, they achieve well.

Some pupils' behaviour at social times is not good enough. Some pupils are made to feel uncomfortable by a few pupils, whose behaviour can be overly boisterous or inconsiderate of others. These pupils sometimes disrupt the smooth running of the school around the site and between lessons. Leaders have taken action to try and address this, but this has not been fully effective. The majority of pupils who communicated with inspectors feel safe at school, but the conduct of the minority makes some pupils feel unsafe at times. Where pupils report bullying, leaders deal with it effectively.

Pupils have lots of opportunities to get involved in school life. The school council, for example, works with leaders to improve the school. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including clubs, trips and visits. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the forthcoming ski trip to Austria and geography field trips.

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

There have been several recent changes in the school's leadership team. Together with subject leaders, they have strengthened the curriculum to make it ambitious for all pupils, including those pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge and skills pupils need to develop. Leaders are taking steps to encourage pupils to take the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

Subject leaders have designed learning that sets out what pupils should learn and the order in which things are taught. This means that pupils develop a secure understanding of key concepts over time.

Teachers use activities and learning methods to help pupils know and remember more. Teachers help pupils to recall earlier learning and understand and use subject-specific vocabulary accurately. They check pupils' understanding through skilful questioning. Mostly, teachers are quick to identify misconceptions before moving on in the curriculum. That said, in some subjects, teachers do not use assessment methods sufficiently well to pinpoint the precise gaps in pupils' learning. Consequently, teachers are not certain about what pupils should practise before moving on to new learning.

Leaders have developed clear plans to support pupils who need extra help to improve their reading. Staff are quick to identify pupils with gaps in their reading knowledge. They put in place effective programmes of support to help these pupils to catch up quickly with their peers. Form time reading and extra-curricular activities, such as book club, promote a culture of reading for pleasure across the school.

Leaders have raised their expectations and prioritised support for pupils with SEND. They have systems in place to identify and match support to the precise needs of this group of pupils. Leaders share essential information about pupils with SEND with teachers. This helps teachers to adapt the delivery of learning activities so that the needs of pupils with SEND are met securely in the classroom.

In lessons, pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Mostly, lessons are focused and disruption free. However, a few pupils make others' experience of school less positive than it should be, through poor behaviour at social times and between lessons. Some pupils are out of lessons when they should not be or are late to class. Leaders have begun to address these issues, but there is more to do to challenge this culture among some pupils. Although leaders have put in place systems for managing pupils' behaviour, a significant minority of pupils, staff and parents and carers are not confident that effective action will be taken when they report concerns.

Leaders place great importance on pupils' personal development. Pupils study topics that are thoughtfully chosen and timed to best support the needs of different age groups. They learn about the importance of inclusion, diversity and tolerance. Pupils appreciate important life lessons that prepare them well for growing up in modern Britain. For example, pupils valued a talk about toxic masculinity and misogyny. The school provides a range of good-quality extra-curricular activities.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of provision that prepares them for their future lives. They receive useful careers advice and guidance, including information about the courses and jobs they can secure after school. Almost all pupils progress to education, employment or training.

Trust leaders, together with the local governing body and senior leaders, are wholly committed to the pupils. Their priorities for school improvement are clear. They have put effective plans in place. They are open about the challenges that they face and are quick to seek further support to ensure that their ambitions are realised in every area of the school.

Many staff enjoy working at the school. Most said that leaders are considerate of their well-being. However, some staff do not always feel supported by senior leaders, particularly with managing their workload or the behaviour of pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders provide all staff and governors with up-to-date, relevant safeguarding training. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders manage information about safeguarding concerns appropriately. They are adept at working with a wide range of external agencies to ensure the right support is put in place for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Pupils are taught about the risks that they may face in the community. For example, they have received visits from external speakers, including the police and local crime prevention organisations. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Most pupils said that they know who they can speak to if they are feeling worried or anxious.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- When assessing pupils' learning, sometimes subject leaders and teachers are not always clear about what knowledge they are measuring. In some instances, checks are not as helpful as they could be in pinpointing what subject content pupils need to revisit and practise. Leaders should ensure that teachers are given training and guidance on how to accurately assess what pupils have learned.
- A few pupils do not behave well at social times and between lessons. They ignore staff instructions, conduct themselves inconsiderately around the site and some engage in antisocial behaviour. This is disruptive to the smooth running of the school day and makes some pupils' experience of school less positive than it could be. Leaders should ensure that behaviour management policies are understood and followed by all staff and pupils with greater consistency. This will help pupils and staff to have greater confidence in the behaviour systems in place and improve behaviour.
- Some staff and pupils do not feel well supported by leaders. As a result, when issues arise, pupils and staff are not confident that their concerns will be listened to. Leaders should ensure that meaningful engagement takes place with all stakeholders and when issues are identified that they are dealt with consistently well.

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	148050
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10267099
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,133
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Marie Garside
Headteacher	Emma Keenan
Website	www.stmonicas.stoccat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Monica's RC High School, a Voluntary Academy, converted to become an academy school in August 2020. When its predecessor school, St Monica's RC High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be requires improvement overall.
- Leaders use alternative provision for a small number of pupils at one unregistered alternative provider and two registered alternative providers.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Salford. The predecessor school's previous section 48 inspection was carried out in July 2019.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other members of staff. They also spoke with members of the trust and the local governing body. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Salford.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the single central record. They met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, art, mathematics, physical education, modern foreign languages and geography. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Kate Bowker, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Dawn Farrent	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Caldecott	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Veitch	Ofsted Inspector

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