

Inspection of Our Lady's Catholic High School

6-16 Amhurst Park, Stamford Hill, London N16 5AF

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Sixth-form provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have created a safe environment for pupils in this school. The school's ethos and the '5 Ps', such as being peaceful and polite, run through all the work that leaders do. Through this approach, leaders and staff foster an environment that is inclusive and celebrates the diversity of pupils' backgrounds. Boys are welcomed into the school in the sixth form, and they settle in very quickly. Overall, pupils are happy here.

Staff have high expectations for all pupils. Pupils study a broad range of subjects. They achieve well, and this is reflected in their examination outcomes at the end of their time in school. Many pupils choose to stay on at the school in the sixth form, where they also have a breadth of academic and vocational courses to select from.

Leaders have introduced a new behaviour policy this year. This policy is easy for pupils to understand. Pupils are motivated by the rewards they receive for their good behaviour. If pupils do not meet leaders' high expectations for their conduct and attitudes, they are given time to reflect, and then further time is taken to restore relationships. This may be between pupils or between pupils and staff. Pupils do not consider bullying to be a big issue in the school. If it happens, they know who to tell, and they trust staff to deal with it swiftly.

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

Pupils study a wide range of subjects so that they are well prepared for their future careers and lives. Subject leaders think carefully about what they want pupils to know and remember and the order in which they should learn this content. Leaders also select topics and themes that reflect the diversity and culture of the school. For example, in history, pupils learn about African kingdoms before they learn about slavery and its abolition. In English, leaders make sure that pupils read books from a rich range of literary traditions. These texts are deliberately selected so that pupils study many female authors, as well as those with diverse backgrounds, such as Malala Yousafzai.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They select activities in their lessons that help pupils to learn new ideas and concepts. This helps pupils to achieve well. Sixth-form students develop a very secure understanding of the knowledge taught on their chosen courses.

Teachers use a range of assessment approaches in lessons. However, there are times when these approaches are not rigorously focused on checking exactly what pupils have learned and remembered. As a result, teaching can sometimes move on to the next step of learning without pupils being secure in their knowledge. This can affect how well some pupils are able to access the next stage of their learning in the curriculum.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and for those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). These pupils study the same subjects as all other pupils. Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly when they join the school. They have developed 'Dos and Don'ts' materials to support teachers to respond effectively to pupils' barriers to learning. Subject leaders also plan their curriculum so that its delivery can be adapted to meet the needs of different pupils. However, within and across departments, adaptations to teaching do not consistently draw on the materials and guidance available. This means that support for pupils with SEND or those who speak EAL is, in some cases, not focused on helping these pupils to make progress through the curriculum.

Leaders want to ensure that pupils read fluently and accurately. They are also ambitious in their work to ensure that pupils are introduced to and become familiar with a broad range of literature. Leaders have put lots of thought into selecting the texts they want pupils to read. Form tutors read these texts to their pupils every week. All pupils have their reading assessed when they join the school. While numbers are small overall, leaders identify those pupils who are not secure in their understanding of phonics. Staff deliver phonics sessions to these pupils. However, sometimes, these sessions are not carefully sequenced so that pupils catch up quickly in their reading.

Pupils and staff agree that behaviour at the school has improved over the last year. Pupils settle down to work in lessons quickly, and they rarely disrupt the learning of others. If pupils lose focus, teachers are quick to apply the school policy, and pupils mostly respond well.

Pupils can take part in several clubs and activities at school, including chess, badminton and choir. Leaders make sure that pupils learn about healthy relationships and staying safe in their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education classes. Pupils in each year group attend retreats, which provides time for reflection and contemplation. They also visit places of worship for other religions, including the local synagogue.

Pupils throughout the school, including in the sixth form, have access to personalised advice on future careers. To expand pupils' knowledge of the world of work, leaders also organise for all pupils to complete work experience placements.

Leaders evaluate their school well, and they have identified key areas for improvement. They have engaged external partners from the local authority to support them with their plans to move the school forward. Governors also know the school and its priorities well. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. They make sure that staff receive regular safeguarding training, as well as frequent and timely updates during the year. Safeguarding leaders, heads of year and attendance staff meet weekly to discuss vulnerable pupils and to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders also ensure that all statutory pre-employment vetting checks are carried out when recruiting new staff.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe. In addition to PSHE lessons, guest speakers visit the school to talk to pupils about their mental and physical health. Pupils know who to report concerns to, and they trust staff to deal with issues they raise.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' guidance to support teachers to adapt their teaching to meet individual pupil's needs is not used consistently. This means that some pupils with SEND are not supported as well as they could be to progress through the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that teachers routinely use the information and guidance they receive to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils.
- A small number of pupils are not confident in their phonics when they arrive at the school. Staff teach these pupils phonics, but it is not delivered in a systematic way. This reduces how well these pupils are supported to catch up in their reading. Leaders should provide these staff with training so that they deliver well-sequenced phonics sessions focused on helping these pupils to catch up quickly.
- Leaders are embedding new assessment approaches in the school. While teachers understand and use these new assessment approaches, there are times when they do not check that pupils have understood the identified knowledge and skills before moving on. This means that some pupils are not ready to take the next step in their learning. Leaders need to ensure that teachers consistently check for understanding before moving pupils through the curriculum.

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	100282
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10255299
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	577
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Carrick
Headteacher	Andy English
Website	www.ourladys.hackney.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	8 and 9 March 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is of the Roman Catholic denomination. It is in the Archdiocese of Westminster. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in May 2017.
- Leaders make use of two registered alternative providers.
- 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.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: science, English, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered pupils' learning in other subjects, including mathematics and French.
- Through discussions with leaders, governors, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. Inspectors also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of employment checks carried out before staff are appointed.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils in all key stages. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes was observed.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about the school's work, including about safeguarding and behaviour. Inspectors also looked at staff, parent and pupil responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Mark Smith, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lauren Thorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Karim Ismail	His Majesty's Inspector
Yvonne Chisholm	Ofsted Inspector

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