

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic College, A Voluntary Academy

Wallasey Village, Wallasey, Merseyside CH45 3LN

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Kevin Maddocks. This school is part of Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Andrew Moor, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Simpson.

What is it like to attend this school?

The culture in this school has improved in recent years. The school now has high expectations of how pupils should behave. Pupils rise to these and conduct themselves well. In lessons, most pupils display positive attitudes to learning.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from strong pastoral support through 'the hub'. This provision, alongside well-trained staff, helps a minority of pupils to reflect on their behaviour or emotions and then re-integrate quickly into lessons. The school deals with incidents of bullying swiftly and effectively. Pupils are happy and feel safe.

The school has thought carefully about pupils' wider development. Pupils are encouraged to pursue interests and talents through a range of activities, such as ukulele, Chinese and poetry clubs. They are especially proud of taking part in whole-school productions.

The school does not have high expectations for pupils' academic achievement. Progress in raising pupils' achievement has been too slow. Consequently, pupils' outcomes, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged, are low. Pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

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

Changes in leaders, of both the school and the trust, have improved pupils' behaviour and created a climate in which pupils can learn. There is a consistent approach to managing behaviour across the school. In most lessons, pupils learn free from distraction. However, the school has not addressed the poor outcomes that too many pupils, including students in the sixth form, achieve.

There is a broad and ambitious curriculum in place, including for pupils in the specially resourced provision, 'The Arc'. In most subjects, the school has considered the important knowledge that pupils should learn. However, at all key stages there is a disconnect between the ambition of the curriculum and the way in which it is delivered. At times, teachers do not use the most effective activities to teach the intended curriculum. Some of the activity choices do not help pupils to remember important knowledge over time.

In several subjects, the assessment methods that teachers use do not link securely to the curriculum. Furthermore, the school's processes to check whether the curriculum is being delivered as intended are not robust. As a result, the school has not identified the precise weaknesses in terms of how the curriculum is delivered and how to remedy them.

The school has taken effective action to prioritise reading across the curriculum. Staff use information about pupils' reading abilities to adapt their teaching. Pupils

who struggle with reading benefit from intensive support. Staff are well trained to be able to deliver the reading curriculum each day. Although pupils say that they enjoy the daily reading sessions in school, only a minority choose to read independently for pleasure.

Many pupils do not attend school regularly. This means that they miss out on learning the full curriculum. The school does not carefully analyse the reasons for pupils' absence. The actions taken to improve pupils' attendance rates have not been effective.

The school engages well with parents. For instance, it recently ran an information evening for parents and carers of Year 11 pupils about how to support them with their preparation for examinations.

The school has a strong moral purpose to ensure that pupils with SEND access and benefit from the same opportunities as their peers. It identifies pupils' additional needs accurately. Pupils with SEND receive effective support. Nevertheless, weaknesses in how well the curriculum is delivered to all pupils prevent pupils with SEND from achieving as well as they could.

The school is committed to improving pupils' wider development. There is a carefully constructed 'Inspire' programme, which broadens pupils' interests, experiences and understanding of others. It is flexible to respond to any issues that arise. For instance, pupils recently learned about the impact of knife crime on victims' families. The careers programme gives pupils access to local employers and prepares them well to make informed decisions about their next steps.

Staff feel that the school listens to their suggestions about well-being. For example, staff helped to design the assessment calendar, which helped to ensure that workload is spread out over the year. They are positive about the changes that have been made since the appointment of the headteacher. The trustees and governors are confident in the school's capacity to improve. However, they have an over-generous view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have not challenged the school sufficiently well to bring about the improvements needed in the quality of education that the school provides.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In many subjects, teachers do not use appropriate pedagogical choices to deliver the curriculum. At times, these choices do not reflect the ambitious aims of the curriculum. Consequently, pupils do not secure a deep body of knowledge in

these subjects. The school should enhance teachers' pedagogical knowledge so that they can deliver the curriculum as intended.

- The school's systems for checking how well the curriculum is delivered are not effective. This means that trustees, governors and the school have an over-generous view of how well pupils learn. The trustees, governors and the school should ensure that there are effective systems in place to check the implementation of the curriculum.
- In some subjects, assessment methods are not used effectively to check what pupils know and remember. This hinders teachers from identifying gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge. The school should continue to refine its approach to assessment in these subjects so that teachers can identify and address any gaps in knowledge.
- Too many pupils and students in the sixth form are absent or persistently absent from school. The school does not systematically identify the barriers to attendance that these pupils have. As a result, many pupils miss out on their education. The school should take all possible steps to improve pupils' attendance.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	143554
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10268375
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,133
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	129
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Simpson
CEO of the trust	Andrew Moor
Headteacher	Kevin Maddocks
Website	www.stmaryswallasey.com
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher commenced his role in November 2021.
- The school hosts a specially resourced provision on behalf of the local authority for up to 24 pupils with autism. There are currently 26 pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 who are part of this provision.
- The school makes use of three unregistered alternative provisions for a small number of pupils.
- The school runs an on-site alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was carried out in 2016. The next inspection is scheduled to take place this academic year.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector met with the CEO of the trust, the chair of the trustees and members of the local governing body, including the vice-chair of governors.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography, mathematics, science, French, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also held discussions with other subject leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation document, school improvement plans, minutes of governor meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils from Years 7 to 13 about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. There were no responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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