

Inspection of St Matthew's RC High School

Nuthurst Road, Moston, Manchester M40 0EW

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Inadequate

The headteacher of this school is Andrew Nightingale. This school is part of the Emmaus Catholic 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), Daniel Copley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Catherine Anderson.

When St Matthew's RC High School was inspected in November 2022, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on two occasions. At the last monitoring inspection, leaders were judged to have made progress to improve the school, but more work was necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has been transformed since the last inspection. Pupils and staff said there has been a tangible change in culture across all areas of school life. Pupils feel safe and happy here. They are proud of their school.

The school has ambitious expectations for behaviour and achievement, and pupils endeavour to meet these expectations. Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), follow a broad and ambitious curriculum. They benefit from the positive changes the school has made to the quality of education it provides. As a result of these improvements, pupils are achieving increasingly well across a range of subjects.

Pupils' behaviour in the school is calm and focused. They learn the importance of making positive choices in their behaviour and learning. This is reflected in pupils' positive conduct. If pupils fall short of the schools' expectations, staff follow a rigorous and consistent approach to address any incidents of misbehaviour effectively.

Pupils enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are keen to represent the school in sporting events. They enthusiastically take on an increasing number of leadership responsibilities such as reading buddies and pupil librarians.

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

The school, with the support of the trust, has considerably raised the level of ambition in, and the quality of, the curriculum. Alongside this, the school has strengthened staffing and provided appropriate training for teachers. This is contributing considerably to pupils achieving better than they did in the past. A growing number of pupils gain qualifications in the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

The school has set out the core knowledge pupils should learn and when this content should be taught. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, and they explain concepts well. Typically, teachers design activities that help pupils to learn successfully. However, in a small number of subjects, there is an inconsistency in how teachers deliver learning. In a few subjects, some of the activities chosen do not help pupils to learn new content well. This means that some pupils do not learn as deeply as they could.

In the majority of subjects, teachers ensure pupils' learning carefully builds on the knowledge and skills they have learned previously. Here, pupils' progress is evident, and they achieve well. However, there are times when teachers' checks on pupils' learning are not as effective. Some pupils have gaps or misconceptions that are not addressed before teachers introduce new learning.

While the impact of the improved curriculum is evident in current pupils' learning, this is not reflected in the 2023 published outcomes. This is because the legacy of weaker curriculums, destabilised staffing and pupils' previous poor attendance rates led to gaps in some older pupils' knowledge.

The school has an effective system in place for pinpointing the support needed by those pupils who are not confident, fluent readers. Extra reading sessions are tailored to enable them to become better readers. As a result, they make greater progress in other subjects. The school actively fosters a love of reading. Pupils enjoy reading class novels from different genres.

The school identifies pupils' additional needs accurately. Staff are provided with the information they need to make appropriate adaptations to the delivery of the curriculum. This helps staff to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. In the main, pupils with SEND achieve well.

The school has raised its expectations of pupils' behaviour. Systems are applied consistently by staff and are understood by pupils. Most pupils behave in line with the school's expectations. On those occasions when pupils fail to meet this standard, they are supported to reflect and improve. The school's successful work with families has secured improvements in attendance for many pupils. The rate of attendance has risen and is now above the national average. The number of pupils who are late to school has decreased, although too many pupils are not punctual to school each day. The school is working to improve this so that valuable learning time is not lost for these pupils.

The school has ensured that the personal, social and health education programme is well considered. Over time, pupils develop an understanding of key topics such as the importance of healthy relationships. Pupils revisit important themes, each time adding more complexity. The school has a comprehensive careers programme in place which supports pupils to make well-informed decisions about their next steps in education or training.

Trustees and governors provide valuable support and constructive challenge, contributing to the school's continuous growth. Pupils, parents, carers and staff value the transparent communication about decisions made about the school. This has fostered increasing trust and support from the community. Leaders are also alert to staff pressures, implementing considered changes to policies and practices to reduce workload and enhance staff well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the school does not check in enough detail how well the curriculum is being implemented. This means that some pupils are not making the progress in these subjects they could. The school should check more carefully that the curriculum is being delivered as intended so pupils know and remember more in these subjects.

- In some subjects, the school's assessment strategies are at an early stage of development. In these subjects, teachers do not check how well pupils have learned important curriculum knowledge. This limits how well teachers support pupils to catch up on missed or forgotten knowledge. The school should ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills they need to identify and remedy gaps in pupils' learning.

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	148389
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10318262
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	1,324
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Catherine Anderson
CEO of the trust	Daniel Copley
Headteacher	Andrew Nightingale
Website	www.smrchs.com
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 February 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust.
- This is a Roman Catholic school in the Diocese of Salford. The school had a section 48 inspection in July 2024. The next inspection will be within five years.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- 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 inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be

given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- 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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and support staff. Leaders from the trust, including the CEO and the director of secondary education, were met with as part of the inspection. The lead inspector also met with representatives from the board of trustees, the local governing body and the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history and modern foreign languages. 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 discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. Additional visits took place to lessons in these subjects.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Rebecca Sharples, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Dympna Woods	Ofsted Inspector
Scott Maclean	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Hammersley	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Yarwood	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector

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