St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School, Ashton-in-Makerfield

Address: Rookery Avenue, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan, Lancashire, WN4 9PF

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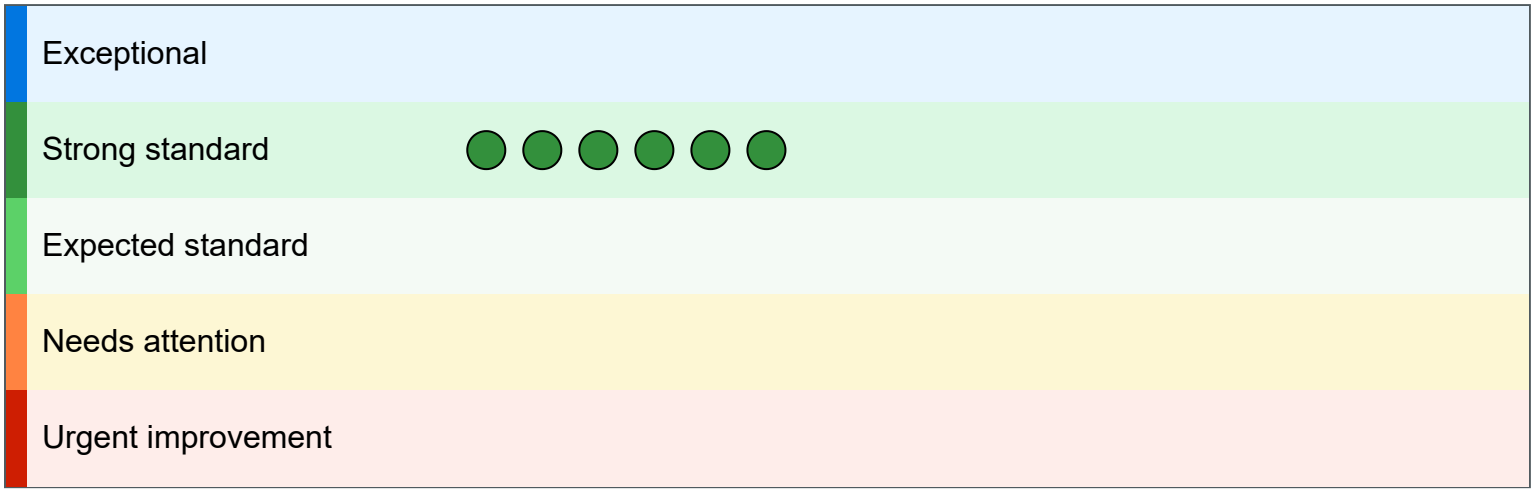
Inspection report: 3 March 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard

Pupils achieve consistently well across the curriculum. Over several years, outcomes in national examinations have been sustained above national averages, including in English and mathematics and across a broad range of subjects. In areas where outcomes are closer to average, pupils engage with demanding work with confidence and persistence. They use precise vocabulary and demonstrate that they gain detailed knowledge as they move through the school. They tackle increasingly complex ideas with rigour, explain their thinking with clarity and develop genuine independence in their learning.

Pupils who face the greatest barriers, including disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to children's social care, achieve extremely well compared with similar pupils nationally. They successfully access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers, and the quality of their work reflects this consistently.

Pupils speak with pride about what they have learned. They leave school thoroughly prepared and highly motivated for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Attendance is a strength, sitting consistently above national figures across all pupil groups. Leaders' monitoring is sharp, meticulous and focused on securing high attendance. Where pupils are identified as at risk of persistent absence, leaders engage individually with each pupil and each family, building a personalised plan that systematically removes the barriers preventing regular attendance. Pupils who were previously most at risk of drifting into persistent absence are now attending regularly. In recent years, leaders' astute work has drastically reduced the number of pupils who are late to school.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. Pupils move around this large school with purpose and show courtesy towards each other and to staff. They are calm and have impressive levels of self-regulation. Transitions into lessons are sharp and unhurried. The reward system, including 'Dumican Dollars' awarded for attendance, is prized by pupils and actively reinforces the behaviours leaders want to see. Suspensions are consistently low over time. Leaders have ensured that on the rare occasions when pupils make the wrong choices, they benefit from sensitive intervention and kindness. This approach is fully understood and consistently applied by staff to ensure that the school maintains a harmonious environment where pupils feel valued. Bullying and discrimination are not tolerated.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

Leaders have set out a broad curriculum that is ambitious, carefully sequenced and built on a sophisticated understanding of how knowledge develops differently across subjects. Each subject identifies the detailed knowledge that pupils need. Staff deliver the curriculum with expertise to ensure that pupils are prepared extremely well for future learning. Older pupils

can select from a wide range of subjects that provide them with the motivation and grounding that they need to move on to well-matched destinations.

Teachers' subject knowledge is consistently secure. In lessons, teachers connect new learning explicitly to prior knowledge, presenting information with clarity and precision. Where pupils face barriers to learning, teachers make intentional, well-matched adaptations that maintain the full ambition of the curriculum for all, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Staff check pupils' understanding skilfully. They use a range of strategies effectively, such as structured feedback lessons, knowledge exercise books and personalised 'gap-closing' activities. All are embedded consistently. Pupils receive the help that they need to address misconceptions with a high level of independence. The work that pupils produce, and their ability to articulate their learning in depth, shows that they are learning the curriculum extremely well. Leaders make regular and accurate evaluations of the impact of the curriculum. They take prompt action to ensure that the curriculum helps pupils to thrive.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Leaders identify pupils' needs with precision. They use a wealth of information and draw on specialist input to build an early and regularly reviewed picture of the needs of each pupil. Leaders ensure that a comprehensive package of support is put in place for pupils who need it. This is carefully matched to their individual needs. Staff receive regular and well-designed training that helps them to skilfully adapt teaching. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities excel as a result. The school's 'learning zone' provides structured, time-limited support that enables pupils to thrive in school life successfully and with confidence. These pupils quickly develop a strong sense of belonging at the school and settle well.

Leaders at all levels work closely with families to reduce the barriers that some pupils have to learning. The impact of well-considered plans is monitored systematically, with leaders able to demonstrate clearly how pupils' needs are being met over time. Leaders work closely with the virtual school to ensure that looked-after pupils receive the targeted support and sustained advocacy that they need. Additional funding, such as pupil premium funding, is deployed intelligently to ensure that pupils who benefit achieve the best outcomes.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders hold a precise understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. They make precise checks on the performance of all aspects of the school to ensure that pupils consistently achieve the best outcomes. Leaders have established a consistent pattern of improvement at the school over several years. Leaders at all levels make decisions that are in the best interests of pupils. Their highly integrated approach to sharing what staff know about pupils ensures that disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to children's social care benefit from all that the school has to offer.

Professional learning for staff is a particular strength. Staff, including early career teachers, access a coherent, evidence-informed programme that builds expertise in curriculum,

teaching, assessment and pastoral care. Leaders are attentive to workload and wellbeing and have measures in place which sustain high-quality teaching and staff commitment over time.

Governors have professional experience across a range of fields and fulfil their statutory duties with rigour and care. They appropriately challenge leaders' evaluations about outcomes, safeguarding and inclusion. They hold leaders to account with precision for the achievement and wellbeing of pupils. Leaders live out their firmly held belief that St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School should be a place where pupils are inspired to want to make the world a better place. They work with sensitivity and patience to ensure that pupils are aspirational and uncover new talents so that they are well placed for future success.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Leaders have built a personal development and wellbeing programme that permeates the culture, the curriculum and the daily experience of pupils. Drawing meaningfully on the public health profile of the local area and the local labour market, leaders ensure that what pupils learn is relevant and genuinely useful to their futures. When an emerging local need arises, new content is fed into assemblies, form time and pastoral sessions without delay. This helps pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe.

The relationships and sex education and health education curriculum is well sequenced, age-appropriate and delivered by specialist teachers. Pupils recall content clearly, including about healthy relationships, online safety and the risks of social media. Leaders prioritise the development of pupils' character, and this is rooted in the school's values. Pupils reflect thoughtfully on ethical questions, understand the consequences of their actions and demonstrate consistently respectful relationships with one another. These qualities are visible across all aspects of school life.

The enrichment offer is extensive and accessible to all, with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils engaging with clubs and activities. Leaders ensure that pupils develop the confidence that they need to speak to large groups of their peers, which helps to build their confidence. Careers education is underpinned by positive employer relationships and alumni speakers from medicine, architecture and law. Pupils feel secure and ambitious about their next steps. The school council operates with maturity and real civic purpose. Pupils understand the democratic process. Through leading assemblies, they help their peers to understand why the school sets such high expectations of their conduct. Leaders prepare pupils with precision and care to understand and uphold fundamental British values. Pupils are deeply respectful of the differences that may exist between people. Leaders ensure that pupils are extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud ambassadors for their school. They bring the school to life with a strong sense of faith, ambition and a deep sense of community. From the first moment of the day, pupils engage freely in morning prayer, recreational sport, music and warm conversation

with staff and peers. Pupils routinely uphold the school's expectations and respond with maturity and self-belief to the routines and values leaders have built over time.

Pupils are safe, well known by staff and deeply valued. Staff notice the smallest changes in how pupils present and respond swiftly to ensure that pupils receive the care that they need so that they can thrive. Pupils know exactly whom to turn to if they have concerns, and they trust the school to act. Vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are looked after and those in receipt of pupil premium funding, receive individually tailored, compassionate support that makes a measurable difference to their lives. Pupils who face the toughest challenges flourish as a result.

Pupils attend school regularly and behaviour is exemplary across the school day, including in less-supervised areas. Pupils move around this large school with courtesy and maturity. The school's clear framework for learning, built on independence, resilience, challenge and collaboration, creates a focused, respectful environment in which pupils are ready to learn and actively participate in lessons. Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils know that staff will take appropriate action should it occur.

Pupils achieve extremely well and hold high aspirations for themselves. Throughout the school, pupils feel secure about their next steps. The enrichment offer is extensive and accessible to all pupils. International trips, elite sport, a flourishing music and arts programme, a neurodiversity gym class and a wide range of leadership roles help pupils to develop the confidence that they need to succeed.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to refine the school's approach to quality assurance so that it enables them to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve the very best outcomes routinely over time.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Stephen Westhead.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior and curriculum leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. They also spoke with a representative from the local authority and the archdiocese.

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.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Catholic religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in January 2024.

The school does not make use of any alternative provisions.

Headteacher: Mr Mark Dumican

Lead inspector:
Andy Cunningham, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Stephen Ruddy, Ofsted Inspector
Craig Yates, Ofsted Inspector
Jamie Jardine, Ofsted Inspector
Scott Fletcher, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 3 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,202
Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,250
Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

13.73%
Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.99%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

6.66%
Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	50.8%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	56.9%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	50.4%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	49.1	46.0	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	51.5	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	49.7	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.16	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0.13	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	31.4%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	19.4%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	22.2%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	38.3	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	35.4	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	36.9	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.40	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.34	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	31.4%	53.1%	-21.7 pp
2023/24 (final)	19.4%	53.1%	-33.8 pp
2022/23 (final)	22.2%	52.4%	-30.2 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	38.3	50.4	-12.1
2023/24 (final)	35.4	50.0	-14.7

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	36.9	50.3	-13.4

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.40	0.16	-0.57
2022/23 (final)	-0.34	0.17	-0.50

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	96%	91%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	96%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	99%	94%	Above

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	6.7%	8.1%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.9%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	7.4%	9.0%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	16.3%	21.9%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	19.0%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	20.6%	26.5%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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