

Saint Paul's Catholic High School

Firbank Road, Newall Green, Wythenshawe, Manchester M23 2YS

Inspection dates

24–25 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The pace of improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, and outcomes for pupils has been too slow since the last inspection. This is because school leaders had not, until recently, tackled weaknesses in these areas with sufficient rigour.
- In mathematics, pupils' achievement has been low for the last three years. Although this is now showing signs of improvement, the school still has ground to make up to ensure that pupils make the progress in mathematics of which they are capable.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability, especially those who are taught in mainstream classes, make less progress than they should. This is because teachers in some subjects do not yet plan suitable methods and strategies to fully meet the needs of these pupils.
- The quality of teaching is variable; not enough teaching is good or better. In some lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Some teaching fails to sufficiently engage pupils' interest.
- The quality of teachers' marking and feedback on pupils' work requires improvement. Feedback sometimes fails to give pupils precise enough guidance on how to improve their work. Teachers use different systems of assessment, which pupils find confusing.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is higher than the national average.
- As pupils move around school, their behaviour can be boisterous and not all staff challenge this.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed executive headteacher has significantly increased the pace of the school's improvement. He has introduced new systems and processes which are already having a positive impact on teaching and leadership.
- The school has a strong team of subject leaders who know their departments well. They check on the work of their colleagues robustly and are taking increasingly effective steps to rectify areas of weakness.
- The governors on the interim management board hold the school to account rigorously and are driving school improvement very strongly.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - taking further steps to improve the teaching of mathematics so that more pupils make the progress that is expected of them
 - ensuring that programmes already under way to improve teaching are developed further to include all staff, so that best practice is shared and more teaching becomes good or better
 - raising expectations of what teachers demand of pupils, so that pupils of all abilities are challenged appropriately and more make the progress of which they are capable
 - improving teachers' planning so that teachers plan more effectively for learning and progress rather than activity
 - ensuring that all teachers mark work in accordance with the school's policy and give pupils precise guidance on what they have done well and how they can improve their work
 - ensuring that teachers' marking addresses and develops pupils' literacy, paying particular attention to the spellings of key words.

- Improve the quality of provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability by:
 - reviewing the support offered in mainstream classes to those pupils who have special educational needs, and ensuring that support effectively meets their needs
 - training staff in all subjects to develop strategies that enable these pupils to make the best possible progress
 - reviewing the effectiveness of special educational needs leadership in order to identify and address appropriate priorities for improvement.

- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - further improving attendance and reducing the persistent absence of a minority of pupils
 - ensuring that all staff take responsibility for challenging behaviour which does not meet the school's expectations.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Until recently, school leaders and governors had not tackled long-standing weaknesses in provision strongly or rapidly enough. As a result, slow progress had been made on some of the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report, including improvements to teaching, pupils' achievement and literacy and numeracy. Positive improvements have been made since the appointment of the executive headteacher, but some important weaknesses remain.
- Outcomes for pupils are improving steadily but achievement in mathematics has lagged behind and more work is needed to ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. The progress made by some pupils who have special educational needs or disability, especially when they are taught in ordinary classes without additional support, is not yet good enough.
- The quality of teaching remains variable and not enough teaching is good or better. Previous systems to improve teaching were not effective enough. The executive headteacher has introduced a programme of professional development for all staff which is clearly beginning to have an impact. Many teachers are trying new learning activities to enthuse their pupils. However, the programme is still new; more work and more time are needed to enable more teachers to improve their practice.
- Following the departure of the previous headteacher earlier in 2016, the Shrewsbury Diocese and the multi-academy trust to which Saint Paul's belongs appointed the executive headteacher to lead the school. He is an experienced and successful headteacher of an outstanding local school, and is a national leader of education. He is ably supported for some of the week by the deputy headteacher from his own school.
- Working closely with Saint Paul's existing leaders, the executive headteacher quickly identified the key steps which the school needed to take to improve rapidly. In a short space of time, he has put in place a range of systems and procedures which are already having a positive effect on improving the school. For example, all teachers now take part in high-quality training which has good teaching at its heart. Staff have welcomed this approach and are positive that their own teaching is improving. They told inspectors that their morale has improved as a result of the support they have had. Similarly, leaders have tightened up the arrangements for the performance management of teachers, introducing greater rigour into the process. The executive headteacher has sharpened the work of other senior leaders and has ensured that their responsibilities now fully match the needs of the school.
- Leaders' assessment of the school's progress and the quality of the education it provides are accurate and realistic. They readily acknowledge the significant amount of work they have still to do and they fully accept the enhanced rigour the executive headteacher has brought. Staff at all levels now say they have clarity about the school's direction, they buy into its vision, and they welcome the firm and decisive leadership of the executive headteacher.
- The school has a strong team of subject leaders who know their departments well. They have all been trained in judging lessons and are now expected to observe teaching in their departments and to evaluate work in pupils' books. They have placed an increased emphasis on checking the work of their colleagues and on ensuring that their teachers perform as they are expected to. In turn, the subject leaders' own work is monitored rigorously by senior leaders. The robustness of these new arrangements is now leading to improving outcomes for pupils in most subject areas.
- Previously, only small numbers of pupils opted for academic subjects in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), which may ultimately result in relatively low scores in the new national Progress 8 measure of achievement. Leaders have now improved the curriculum on offer to pupils, so that it offers much more breadth and balance and meets their needs, and national expectations, more effectively. Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities outside school hours, such as lunchtime and after-school sports clubs, participation in the rock band or school musical, modern language clubs and visits to events and exhibitions.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. The school consistently emphasises its core values of religious respect and respect for ourselves and others, the school and the community; during the inspection the great majority of pupils honoured and adhered to these values. The quality of displays all around the school, many of which encourage and develop pupils' awareness of spiritual or moral themes and ideas, is impressive. Inspectors observed a very strong Year 9 assembly in which pupils responded really well to a presentation about friendship and peer pressure. Year 8 pupils have the opportunity to go on a short religious retreat.

■ The governance of the school

- The Shrewsbury Diocese and the multi-academy trust had serious concerns that the former governing body was not securing school improvement rapidly enough. As a result, they took decisive action by dissolving the governing body and replacing it in January 2016 with an interim management board. This board comprises several very experienced people, including current and former headteachers and inspectors. They bring significant and valuable expertise to the governance of the school.
- The board is already making a significant contribution to school improvement and is driving this forward strongly in conjunction with the executive headteacher. Governors are determined that the school will improve rapidly and securely. They have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and of the work it still needs to do to become good. They hold senior leaders rigorously to account for the school's performance, asking searching questions as necessary. They do not accept underperformance.
- The board has strong arrangements in place to ensure that there is sufficient leadership capacity to drive the school forward. They have secured the services of the executive headteacher and his deputy for the whole of the next academic year for Saint Paul's, and they have plans to re-establish a local governing body next year when the time is ripe and the school is sufficiently improved.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements. The school has rigorous arrangements in place which ensure that safeguarding checks on all staff and visitors are carried out thoroughly. Records of any safeguarding incidents are meticulously maintained. All staff have had safeguarding training. The new safeguarding policy has been ratified by the multi-academy trust.
- Leaders are aware of the government's 'Prevent' programme, which seeks to protect pupils from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, but training for staff on this has not yet taken place, though it is planned to happen in the near future.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Teaching, learning and assessment across the school are not yet consistently good, and teaching over time has not secured good outcomes for pupils. This is because some staff do not yet have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and work set for pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs or disability, does not always match their needs accurately. This slows their progress. Inspectors saw some books of pupils with low ability, for instance, where teachers do not insist on pupils finishing work to a reasonable standard. Teachers' formal planning, where it exists, is sometimes centred on the activities pupils will do in lessons, rather than on the learning which will enable them to make better progress.
- Where teaching sometimes failed to enthuse pupils or to grasp their interest, pupils' concentration and effort wavered. In several lessons seen, pupils did not engage fully in the learning and did not participate much in the lesson, and inspectors also observed lessons where teachers' questioning remained at a superficial level and did not extend pupils' thinking or develop their deeper understanding.
- In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, teaching has been affected in the last two years by a high degree of staffing instability, which resulted in too many classes being taught by temporary teachers. Consequently, pupils' achievement has been lower than expected in mathematics and science. Core subject leaders recognise that there has been a legacy of underachievement caused by weaker teaching in the past, and that they still have more to do to make teaching consistently good. The departments have more settled and stable staff this year, however, and leaders are beginning to see standards rise again.
- When the executive headteacher arrived he found that the school's assessment processes were not rigorous enough. He has now ensured that assessments are more accurate and reliable, but there remains some inconsistency in the way in which teachers and departments use assessment, which pupils sometimes find confusing.
- The standard of teachers' marking and feedback on pupils' work requires improvement. This is because the effectiveness of teachers' marking, and the quality of the guidance they offer to pupils on improving work, are very inconsistent. Consequently, the impact of feedback on improving learning varies considerably. In some cases, teachers are not yet developing pupils' basic skills well enough; for example, the correction of basic spelling errors, including key subject-specific words, is far from consistent.
- Leaders recognise that teaching needs to improve further. The recently introduced programme of professional development for all staff builds on the good practice which already exists in the school and is

supported by colleagues from other schools, including from the national teaching school led by the executive headteacher. Staff say that the programme is really making a difference to their teaching.

- There is plenty of existing good practice at Saint Paul's. In the best lessons seen, teachers used well-considered strategies to motivate pupils and help them learn. In these lessons, teachers' expectations and levels of challenge were high and pupils learned rapidly. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, the teacher's assessment of pupils' progress showed her that several were ready to move on; as a result, she provided them with additional challenges, which pupils relished. In a Year 9 drama class, pupils developed stylised scenarios. The teacher's deep questioning tested their understanding of stylisation and several pupils responded intelligently with strong ideas. Pupils in a Year 10 science lesson on spectroscopy exclaimed, 'Wow!' when they saw the colours produced in a blue flame.
- In classes where pupils who have particular special educational needs or disabilities were grouped together for additional support, such as the Year 7 and 8 nurture groups, teaching was often strong. Very low-ability pupils in a Year 8 lesson enjoyed their first taste of Italian and made good progress. In a Year 8 technology lesson on the qualities of plastic phone holders, the teacher's patient and persistent questioning of the pupils ensured that even the weakest pupil made very good progress. This lesson was characterised by the very high expectations the teacher had of her pupils and, as a result, all rose splendidly to the demands she made on them.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good. The behaviour seen in most lessons was positive, and was well managed by teachers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The quality of education for those pupils who have special educational needs or disability who are taught in mainstream classes needs improvement, as not enough of them are making the progress of which they are capable. Some teachers are not yet planning well enough to meet the needs of these pupils and in some classes there is a need for additional adult support for individual learners; the school has reduced the numbers of its teaching assistants this year. Pupils in small nurture groups in Years 7 and 8 receive good support.
- Recorded incidents of bullying and racist abuse have declined over the last three years. Pupils told inspectors that there is some bullying, but they are confident that staff tackle it quickly when it does occur. However, a small group of vulnerable pupils told inspectors that they had suffered some bullying and had witnessed racial harassment.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. Pupils generally feel safe in school and they know who to turn to if they have a problem. The school site is secure. The school has trained its pupils how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils are taught how to maintain healthy lifestyles.
- School leaders maintain close contact with pupils who attend alternative provision. There is good liaison with colleagues in these other settings to ensure that pupils' needs are met effectively. Leaders rigorously check pupils' attendance at alternative providers and ensure that all safeguarding aspects are secure.
- Pupils say that they do not have much opportunity to express their opinions about the school, though staff have acted on the results of pupil surveys, for example to improve the library and the toilets. The school council has recently been re-introduced.
- Pupils have the opportunity to learn about British values through personal, health, social and citizenship education, and, for those who opt for it, the study of law at key stage 4. Most pupils show respect for others and there are good relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- During the inspection pupils mainly moved smartly and sensibly around school, though inspectors noticed a number of pupils who lacked urgency when moving to their next lesson; staff were on hand at these times to supervise movement, but not all staff chided pupils who were moving too slowly or who were late for lessons. Several pupils interviewed told inspectors that behaviour around the building is sometimes much worse than was seen during the inspection, and some staff also thought that corridor behaviour needs improvement on occasion.
- The executive headteacher has introduced a new behaviour code. The majority of pupils follow this in

lessons; inspectors saw very few incidences of low-level disruption, and teachers usually managed behaviour well. Sometimes, however, where teaching did not inspire the pupils, their attention wandered and some began to chat with their neighbours. Although most pupils behaved respectfully, inspectors saw a number of lessons where pupils were compliant and lacked engagement rather than being active participants in their own learning.

- The new behaviour code, and the school's use of its own internal Romero Centre, where pupils are re-integrated into lessons, have helped the school reduce the number of exclusions since last year. Exclusion figures remain higher than national averages, however, and particularly affect disadvantaged pupils. School leaders do not yet analyse exclusion statistics accurately enough for this group of pupils.
- Attendance overall is a little below the national average but is improving slowly. The persistent absence of a minority of pupils is also reducing, but not quickly enough, and remains too high. The school's attendance team now tackles absence tenaciously, including the use of the courts, and is having some success with individuals; staff feel that delays in the court procedures last year hindered their attempts to reduce persistent absence.
- Punctuality to school has improved considerably in the past year.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- In 2015, there was some improvement in the school's GCSE results, but the proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, remained well below the national average. Several subjects also performed well below national averages. Mathematics was a particular concern; although the percentage of pupils making expected progress in mathematics rose when compared to 2014's figures, it remained significantly lower than national averages. This had been the case in mathematics for three consecutive years. Pupils in English, however, achieved in line with national expectations.
- The school's own data show that GCSE outcomes will improve again in 2016. The school's Progress 8 score, by which secondary schools will be measured in future, is predicted to be very close to the national average. Most subjects look set to improve their performance this year, including mathematics, where the proportion of pupils making expected progress is predicted to rise closer to national averages, albeit still not close enough. Staff have a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of their predictions, following the introduction of more rigorous processes this year.
- There is some concern that the likely improvement this year may not be sustained for pupils in the current Year 10, as the school is predicting at present that the overall achievement of this cohort of pupils will dip in 2017. Mathematics, however, is expected to continue its positive upwards trend of improvement, and leaders expect English to remain close to national averages. Inspectors looked at a sample of Year 10 pupils' work in a range of subjects, which provided some encouragement: work set in most subjects usually challenged the pupils at appropriate levels, including for the most able pupils; pupils often produced extended and successful pieces of writing; there was evidence in the books of pupils progressing well through their subjects.
- Beyond Year 10, the picture looks brighter. Progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 is stronger and the school's long-term predictions for these year groups suggest that pupils will achieve GCSE outcomes at least in line with current national averages.
- In recent years, there have been wide discrepancies between the performances of different groups in the school. Gaps between the results achieved by disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school and nationally, for example, were too wide. These discrepancies are now reducing in most cases. The school is making effective use of its pupil premium funding (additional government money to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils). In 2015, most achievement gaps for disadvantaged pupils narrowed somewhat, and this trend is set to continue over the next few years; in current Years 7 and 8 these gaps have virtually disappeared, so that disadvantaged pupils are now achieving as well as other pupils in the school. Similarly, the wide gap which previously existed between the performance of boys and that of girls is also reducing to a minimum in all year groups except Year 10.
- The school has only small numbers of most-able pupils. The proportions of pupils making more than expected progress in English and Maths remain below national averages, but overall predictions for this year and for the pupils in Years 7 and 8 show that this group of pupils will achieve as they are expected to. Projected Progress 8 figures for Years 9 and 10 are less promising.
- Pupils from ethnic minority groups generally achieve well. The support for newly arrived pupils who have English as an additional language is effective.

- The principal exception to the improving performance of different groups is that of pupils who have special educational needs or disability in ordinary classes, whose achievement is currently well below where it needs to be.
- The school is working hard to improve pupils' literacy. The great majority of pupils with low prior attainment in English who have been supported with 'catch-up' funding have improved their reading ages significantly. Pupils in nurture groups in Years 7 and 8 say that they receive positive help with reading and improving their English, and Year 10 pupils help younger pupils with their reading. Pupils are encouraged to read widely. The school librarian runs a number of initiatives to promote reading, such as World Book Day and visits by authors, and the number of books borrowed from the library is increasing. Unfortunately, a minority of teachers are not yet supporting pupils' literacy effectively in their marking, as they are not correcting literacy errors consistently enough.
- School leaders recognise that the development of numeracy across subjects is only just beginning and lags some way behind. A specialist mathematician has now been given the responsibility for developing this across the school.
- Relatively low achievement in recent times, especially in mathematics, has meant that some pupils have left Saint Paul's without adequate preparation for the next stage of their education or for working life. This will improve as results across the school rise this year and subsequently. The school offers careers guidance to pupils, especially in Years 8 and 11, but the overall leadership of this needs improvement, as monitoring of the programme is sketchy. Year 10 pupils are disappointed that they will not have the opportunity to do work experience this year; the school is reviewing this currently.

School details

Unique reference number	139456
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10011693

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	863
Appropriate authority	The interim management board
Chair	Maureen Sweeney
Executive Headteacher	Tony Billings
Telephone number	0161 499 0000
Website	www.st-paulshigh.net
Email address	admin@st-paulshigh.net
Date of previous inspection	20–21 January 2015

Information about this school

- Saint Paul’s Catholic High School is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school’s pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The biggest group is White British.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is more than double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support through the pupil premium is more than double the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- In key stage 4, a few pupils currently receive full-time alternative educational provision in local pupil referral units or in the hospital school.
- The school meets the government’s current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- Saint Paul’s is currently led by an executive headteacher from All Hallows Catholic College in Macclesfield, who is a national leader in education.
- The school has an interim management board which acts as the temporary governing body.
- The school has strong partnerships with, and receives strong support from All Hallows Catholic College, the Wythenshawe Catholic Academy Trust, the Manchester Catholic Education Partnership and the Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons, two of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors visited tutor time and an assembly and observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons. They scrutinised some pupils' exercise books across subjects in more depth. They also looked at information on pupils' current progress and attainment.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders, class teachers and governors. They also met with a representative from the Shrewsbury Diocese.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils formally and spoke with many more pupils informally. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of documents. These included: development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; external reports; policies; safeguarding procedures and records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- The inspection team took account of the 15 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and the eight free-text responses received from parents. There were no responses to a questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Clive Hurren, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Lomas	Ofsted Inspector
Jan Peckett	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector

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