

Saint Paul's Catholic High School

Firbank Road, Newall Green, Manchester M23 2YS

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, GCSE outcomes have remained well below national averages. Pupils' progress is now improving. However, a legacy of poor teaching means that too many pupils do not achieve well across a range of subjects.
- The progress of current pupils is improving. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, still lags behind that of others at the school and nationally.
- Some pupils, especially in key stage 4, have large gaps in their learning due to historical weaknesses in teaching.
- A number of younger pupils raised concerns about the behaviour of some older pupils. At times, this behaviour makes younger pupils feel uncomfortable.
- Although pupils' behaviour has improved significantly, it is still not good enough in some lessons.
- Until recently, the curriculum has not helped pupils to learn well and make good progress across a range of subjects. Leaders have made positive changes. However, it is too early to see what impact these changes will have.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has had considerable impact over the last year. Together with his leadership team, he has improved behaviour, attendance and teaching.
- High-quality training has improved middle leaders' skills. This has contributed to the improvement in teaching across the school and is helping pupils to make better progress.
- The appointment of a new coordinator has led to considerable improvement in the provision for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Consequently, these pupils are beginning to make stronger progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving. Many work well independently or in groups. Pupils are generally confident and happy to offer their opinions.
- Pupils benefit from good support for their personal development and welfare.
- Attendance has improved steadily and is now in line with historical national averages for all groups of pupils.
- Governors and directors of the trust offer considerable support to the headteacher. They know the school well and hold leaders to account for the improvements that are needed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, by:
 - addressing the gaps in pupils’ knowledge, understanding and skills, especially in key stage 4, caused by weaker teaching in the past
 - enabling disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, to make at least the same progress as other pupils nationally.
- Build on recent improvements to pupils’ behaviour, by:
 - further reducing the occasions when weaker behaviour in classrooms and around the school site interrupts learning and causes some younger pupils to feel uncomfortable.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school has passed through a turbulent period. Senior leadership has changed several times over the last few years. With the arrival of the current headteacher, the school has stabilised. There is now a strong leadership team in place which has brought about considerable improvement to the school.
- The headteacher is a calm and effective leader with a clear vision for improvement. He has appropriate plans in place to bring about change. Staff understand the headteacher's vision and have confidence in his ability to bring about further improvement.
- Since the last inspection, there has been considerable staff turnover. This has led to many pupils being taught by supply teachers. The lack of subject-specific teachers contributed significantly to the particularly poor results in 2017. Leaders have taken effective action and all departments are now fully staffed with specialist teachers. This contributed to the considerably improved GCSE results of 2018.
- Leaders are aware that historical weaknesses in teaching have impacted negatively on the progress of past and current pupils. They have strengthened their monitoring of teaching and learning, which has enabled them to identify strengths and priorities for development. In turn, this has enabled leaders to provide staff with high-quality, whole-school training based on teachers' needs. Where necessary, leaders provide individualised support to those teachers requiring specific help. Teaching is improving as a result.
- Leaders have raised teachers' expectations with the introduction of aspirational targets for pupils. As a result, most teachers now set work that challenges pupils to do their best. Pupils are more engaged in their learning and are making better progress than has been the case in the past. Leaders at all levels use the information they have about pupils' progress to provide additional support for those who fall behind. This is helping teachers to begin to fill gaps in pupils' learning and therefore partly compensate for historical weaknesses in teaching. However, some pupils, particularly those in key stage 4, still have large gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills due to the weak teaching that they have received in the past.
- Middle leaders feel empowered by the increased responsibility that they have been given. They monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their respective areas well. They use departmental time effectively to support teachers to improve their practice. As a result, in most departments, pupils are making stronger progress in their learning.
- Leaders have a clear and appropriate rationale for their use of the additional funding provided by the pupil premium. They understand the barriers often faced by disadvantaged pupils at the school and have targeted their spending to reduce the impact of these impediments. For example, they have focused on improving the attendance, behaviour and aspirations of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders' use of the pupil premium has had a demonstrable impact on improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. It has also contributed to a reduction in rates of exclusion for these pupils. The performance of disadvantaged pupils in the 2018 GCSE examinations also indicates that the difference between the progress of this group of pupils and that

of others nationally has begun to diminish. Despite this, broad differences between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, and other pupils nationally still remain.

- The appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has had a significant impact on the progress of pupils with SEND. Leaders have ensured that pupils' needs are now correctly identified, and that pupils receive appropriate support. The progress of pupils with SEND is now stronger as a result.
- Leaders have made changes to the curriculum. In the past, the curriculum did not meet the needs of all pupils. For example, there were few opportunities for pupils to take vocational qualifications and no pupils were able to take triple science. The changes that leaders have made to the option process and key stage 4 curriculum means that the curriculum now meets pupils' needs more effectively. However, these changes have only been made recently and so it is too early to evaluate the impact they are having on pupils' outcomes.
- The provision of high-quality spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education is very important to leaders and part of the Catholic ethos of the school. The curriculum provides time for pupils to learn the importance of British values. However, some pupils' behaviour demonstrates that these values are not fully understood by all.
- Leaders have recently introduced compulsory lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) for all pupils. Pupils' learning in PSHE is improving their preparedness for life in modern Britain and ensuring their good personal development.
- Leaders provide independent careers advice and guidance. Pupils value the support that they receive in this area. Pupils can make informed choices about their further education and future career paths. The proportion of pupils who move on to further education, training or employment has increased over the last two years.

Governance of the school

- Directors of the trust and governors are knowledgeable and work closely together to support and challenge the headteacher and oversee the school's work. Together, they ensure that the school is driven by a moral purpose to improve the life chances of pupils. They share a nuanced understanding of both the local area and the wider changes that are taking place nationally within education.
- Governors and trustees are knowledgeable and well informed. They know the school's strengths and where it needs to improve. Trustees have played a key role in bringing strength and stability to the school's leadership. The trust has also brokered high-quality support for leaders that is helping to bring about improvement.
- Directors of the trust delegate responsibility for performance and standards across the school to the governing body. Members of the local governing body possess the necessary skills and expertise to do this effectively and have helped leaders to bring about improvements to teaching, pupils' attendance and personal development.
- Governors utilise a number of effective strategies to oversee the school's work. For example, they work closely with the school's improvement partner. In turn, trustees carefully check the effectiveness of governance.

- Governors work closely with school leaders to ensure that the processes in place to keep children safe are effective. Governors have all received appropriate, up-to-date training on safeguarding and the key issues that face their pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that appropriate systems are in place so that only adults who are safe to work with pupils are employed in the school. The safeguarding policy has been updated this year and training is delivered frequently to teachers. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil and are aware of the key safeguarding issues in the local area.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. Leaders have replaced supply staff with high-quality, subject-specialist teachers. This has helped to improve teaching, which in turn is helping pupils to know and understand more.
- Teachers' questions challenge pupils to think deeply about their learning and refine their understanding. Teachers model the questions that they want pupils to ask themselves and each other while learning. Pupils are beginning to develop resilience. They work well to complete tasks and develop high-quality answers to questions.
- While the vast majority of teaching and learning is good, there are still some teachers who do not routinely provide appropriate challenge to pupils. In these cases, pupils sometimes lose focus and pupils' progress is weaker as a result. Leaders are aware of this and use individual support to help these teachers to improve their practice. Consequently, teaching is continuing to improve.
- Leaders are aware of the importance of improving pupils' literacy skills. Leaders have introduced processes that help pupils to broaden their reading. Pupils now read a greater range of books. Books are selected to ensure that pupils' choices are targeted at an appropriate reading age. This, together with individualised support, is helping pupils to catch up if they enter the school with reading skills below the national expectation.
- Teachers across all subjects support pupils to develop their grammar and use of subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils' work demonstrates that they use grammar and key vocabulary with increasing skill.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are typically attentive learners. They actively participate in their learning, are keen to answer questions and demonstrate resilience when working on challenging

tasks. They work well together and demonstrate respect for other people's points of view. They listen carefully to each other and the teacher and reflect before offering a response.

- Pupils told inspectors that they are taught how to keep themselves healthy, both emotionally and physically. They know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils said that they typically feel safe and that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively when it happens.
- There is a comprehensive programme to support pupils' SMSC development. Leaders use the school's faith values to help pupils to understand British values such as tolerance and the rule of law.
- Leaders have recently strengthened the PSHE curriculum to ensure that pupils benefit from a systematic and broad education in these areas.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Leaders have made a number of changes that have led to significant improvements to pupils' behaviour. However, it is not yet good.
- A number of younger pupils raised concerns about the behaviour of a significant minority of older pupils. They told inspectors that they sometimes feel intimidated by the rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour of these pupils. They said that these pupils sometimes use racist and homophobic language. They indicated that staff resolve issues that are reported to them capably. However, some pupils told inspectors that they had stopped reporting such behaviour.
- A number of staff raised concerns about pupils' behaviour when completing the Ofsted survey. Over one quarter of the staff who responded to the survey indicated that they do not feel that pupils' behaviour is at least good. Some raised specific concerns about poor behaviour on the corridors. Pupils who completed the Ofsted survey were generally not complimentary about the behaviour of their peers. For example, only a minority of respondents indicated that behaviour in lessons and around the school was good most or all of the time.
- Governors, teachers and pupils told inspectors that behaviour has improved significantly. Middle leaders feel that they are now able to sanction pupils appropriately for poor behaviour. This is having a positive impact on behaviour in lessons. Leaders' behaviour logs demonstrate that poor behaviour is dealt with swiftly and that the number of recorded incidents of poor behaviour has decreased markedly.
- The impact of these improvements is evident in the behaviour of many pupils. They are typically friendly and polite to each other and to staff. Pupils like and value their teachers and are welcoming and helpful to visitors. Most pupils move around the school calmly and efficiently to ensure that they arrive promptly for lessons.
- Pupils demonstrate respect for their environment. There is no graffiti in the school and pupils do not drop litter. The school is a pleasant place to learn.
- Despite this clear improvement, pupils' behaviour is still not good in a significant minority of lessons. In some of these lessons, pupils do not demonstrate the same

commitment to their learning as is increasingly evident in the majority of lessons. In other lessons, low-level misbehaviour continues to disrupt learning. Pupils' behaviour is weaker when teaching is not well matched to their needs.

- Attendance has improved steadily over the last three years. Overall attendance is now higher than historical national averages. Furthermore, all groups of pupils have overall attendance in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has also reduced significantly for all groups of pupils.
- Leaders have reduced the proportion of pupils who are excluded from the school. The proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period has reduced steadily over the last three years. The proportion of pupils who receive more than one fixed-term exclusion has also reduced significantly.
- Leaders have appropriate systems in place to check on the behaviour and attendance of pupils who attend alternative provision. Leaders communicate regularly with providers and ensure that pupils are safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The published data for GCSE performance has shown that progress and attainment measures have been well below national averages for several years. In 2017, these results dropped further. As a result of improvements in teaching, the GCSE outcomes for 2018 showed some improvement. However, pupils' progress and attainment remained well below national averages.
- GCSE outcomes from 2018 indicate that Year 11 pupils had made stronger progress in mathematics and, particularly, English than their counterparts from the previous year. This helped to increase the proportion of pupils attaining a good pass in both English and mathematics to narrowly below the national average. This improvement was largely the result of better teaching by full teams of specialist teachers.
- The proportions of pupils attaining a standard pass or higher in history, geography, biology, chemistry and physics also increased in 2018. Despite this, the overall progress made by pupils in humanities and science remained below others nationally. In contrast, the small group of pupils who studied a modern foreign language in key stage 4 made very strong progress in that subject during their time at the school.
- Despite improvements, the weak teaching that pupils received in earlier years continues to have an impact on pupils' progress in key stage 4. Current teaching is beginning to address the legacy of historical weaknesses. However, many older pupils continue to have marked gaps in their learning.
- The most able pupils continue to make less progress than others nationally with similar starting points. Leaders are aware of this and have taken actions to ensure that these pupils are more systematically challenged in their learning. However, these actions are recent and therefore it is difficult to assess their impact.
- Pupils have continued to make weak progress in science in recent years. Leaders have therefore arranged for the department to be supported by colleagues from Blessed Thomas Holford Teaching School. Inspectors gathered evidence that indicates pupils

are beginning to make better progress in science, partly because the department is now fully staffed by a team of specialist teachers.

- Work in pupils' books demonstrates that pupils are continuing to make stronger progress over time across all year groups. Pupils' work indicates that younger pupils are making stronger progress than those in key stage 4.
- Disadvantaged pupils are also making stronger progress across the curriculum. The 2018 GCSE outcomes indicate that these pupils had made significantly better progress during their time at the school than their predecessors from the previous year. Furthermore, a detailed scrutiny of the work produced by these pupils confirms that their progress is continuing to improve. This is due to strong leadership in this area and discerning use of the pupil premium. Despite this, significant differences remain between the attainment and progress of these pupils compared to others nationally. In particular, the progress of disadvantaged boys continues to lag behind that of others.
- The procedures put in place by the new SENCo ensure that pupils' needs are accurately identified. Teachers are given appropriate advice to ensure that pupils with SEND receive the support that they require. As a result, these pupils are now making stronger progress, particularly in key stage 3.
- The proportion of pupils advancing to an appropriate destination increased significantly in 2018 and is now in line with historical national averages. This is because pupils now benefit from improved careers advice and guidance. Leaders have also modified the curriculum to provide pupils with more vocational options, such as catering and engineering, which has helped some pupils to see a clearer pathway for their future once they leave the school.

School details

Unique reference number	139456
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10053355

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	751
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Maureen Sweeney
Headteacher	Alex Hren
Telephone number	0161 4990000
Website	http://www.st-paulshigh.net/
Email address	admin@st-paulshigh.net
Date of previous inspection	May 2016

Information about this school

- St Paul's Catholic High School is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is considerably higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND and the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan are both in line with national averages.
- The proportion of girls in the school is higher than the national average.
- In key stage 4, a small number of pupils attend alternative provision at The Fermain Academy and the Manchester Secondary Pupil Referral Unit.
- The school is a member of the Wythenshawe Catholic Academy Trust. The directors of the trust are responsible for the core governance functions of setting the school's

direction, holding the headteacher to account and ensuring financial probity. The members of the local governing body are appointed by the trustees. The scheme of delegation sets out clearly what powers have been delegated to the local governing body and executive officers.

- The school is currently being supported by Blessed Thomas Holford Teaching School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects, including joint observations with school leaders.
- Inspectors formally scrutinised pupils' work from Years 7, 9 and 11 across a range of subjects, alongside school leaders. They also looked at pupils' work when observing teaching and learning.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors spoke with a group of curriculum leaders and a group of teachers.
- Inspectors also met formally with four groups of pupils from Years 7, 8, 9 and 11. Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally during social times.
- An inspector spoke with two members of the governing body, including the vice-chair. An inspector also spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust board, a representative of the diocese and the headteacher of the teaching school that is providing support to St Paul's Catholic High School.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including school policies, safeguarding procedures, leaders' self-evaluation and leaders' school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the 82 responses to the pupil survey, the 49 responses to the online staff questionnaire, the 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the five written responses from parents.

Inspection team

Erica Sharman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Buckland	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Holmes	Ofsted Inspector
Amanda Nicholson	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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