

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College

Highfield Road, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 7DW

Inspection dates

6 June and 27–28 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and senior leaders are rightly proud of the strong Catholic ethos which permeates through every facet of school life.
- All staff and governors contribute towards building the inclusive, welcoming environment at Saints Peter and Paul. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are evident.
- Attainment of pupils has risen over the past three years. A rising percentage of pupils now leave the school with good GCSE grades in English and mathematics.
- The school's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. The majority of pupils behave well and are tolerant and respectful towards others.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress from their starting points.
- Provision for pupils who come to high school with some barriers to learning is strong. The revised curriculum pathways ensure that all pupils are supported to make progress.
- Careers information, advice and guidance is a strength of the school. Leaders ensure that pupils secure places in further education, training or employment.
- Progress and attendance in sixth form have improved for current students. Students are known and well supported by staff. Success rates for students who need to gain GCSEs in mathematics and English are above national average.
- A redesigned curriculum, supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, ensures that all pupils have access to a broad, balanced and enriching range of experiences.
- Leaders and governors hold staff firmly to account. Middle leaders are involved in ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in their subject, but some variations still exist.
- Disadvantaged pupils are well cared for, but did not make as much progress as they should in 2016. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is poor compared to their non-disadvantaged peers nationally.
- Some pupils are regularly absent from school, particularly those who transfer into school later on in the year.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. At times, some leaders are too positive and need to ensure that all improvement plans are focused on securing improved pupil progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4, particularly in mathematics.
- Ensure that governors develop a better understanding of how well all disadvantaged pupils are progressing so that they can hold leaders to account and swiftly address any underachievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Continue to build on improvements to the quality of teaching and learning so that the current slight variations in the quality of teaching across departments are further diminished.
- Further improve the attendance of pupils who are regularly absent from school, particularly those who transfer into school later than at the beginning of Year 7.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and leadership team demonstrate unwavering commitment to improving the life chances of all pupils at the school. The Catholic ethos of the school is lived out through pupils and staff as they take part in collective worship and try to make a difference in their local communities by putting their 'faith in action'.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are woven through the fabric of the school. Activities, reflections, assemblies and lessons are strategically and carefully planned to help pupils to develop into thoughtful, caring citizens of the future.
- Pupils have a good understanding of democracy and have been taught well about topical issues such as the European Union and general elections. Pupils have a good awareness and understanding of the faiths of others and are welcoming to pupils who are different from themselves. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Senior leaders are well supported by a growing body of strong subject leaders. Middle leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and the sixth form leader, are effective and their actions have had a positive effect on the progress of current learners. Leaders at all levels hold teachers firmly to account through appraisal and quality assurance systems.
- Links with the Liverpool archdiocesan cluster of schools have provided valuable support and training for both middle and senior leaders. As a result of this support, leaders are confident in quality assuring new assessment processes. They ensure that new specifications and schemes of work are appropriately challenging and relevant to new examination requirements.
- Leaders are reflective and make changes to strategies if they are not successful. New assessment procedures, coupled with a renewed focus on behaviour since September, have created an environment that is focused on improving outcomes for pupils.

- The vast majority of staff are proud to work at the school. Newly qualified teachers appreciate the support and training that they receive, and speak positively about their experiences at the school.
- Additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent effectively to improve the progress of pupils. The careful deployment of additional adults ensures that support is targeted well, particularly in the new 'C4' and 'Greenhouse' curriculum pathways.
- The revised curriculum pathways, developed by leaders in addition to the rich extra-curricular offer, are a strength of the school. The strong leadership of curriculum and achievement is pivotal in bringing about improved outcomes for current pupils. Pupils are encouraged to join a wide range of activities, from sport to drama, chess and music.
- The use of the funding for pupils who need additional literacy and numeracy support is highly effective in helping these pupils to catch up with their peers. Strategies and resources build on a seamless progression from primary learning. This enables pupils to develop reading, writing and number skills so that they can begin to make good progress.
- Leaders have spent the pupil premium funding on developing new curriculum pathways. They provide wraparound care and support for the most vulnerable disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders and governors recognise that these strategies have only just begun to have the desired effect on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders acknowledge that pupil premium funding needs to focus equally on the most able disadvantaged pupils. This is so that they make progress that is more in line with their non-disadvantaged peers nationally.
- Leaders and the local authority recognise that the large numbers of pupils who transfer into the school at points other than at the beginning of Year 7 are a challenge for leaders and teachers. These pupils are welcomed into the school and the majority of them settle quickly. Some pupils, particularly those who have experienced significant upheaval in previous schools, take longer to engage with the school. This has an adverse effect on their attendance and their behaviour, despite leaders' best efforts. Inspectors were satisfied that leaders are doing all that they can to ensure that pupils are on appropriate pathways, attend school and achieve as highly as possible, despite their unsettled past. As a result of the effectiveness of leaders' work with these vulnerable pupils, all pupils, without exception, go on to further education, employment and training.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and key priorities of the school. They ask questions and hold leaders to account for achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Governors are fully supportive of the headteacher's continued drive for improvement. For example, they ensure that only teaching which meets the high standards set through the appraisal process is awarded appropriate pay progression.

- Governors are trained in safeguarding and are up to date with latest government guidance in this area. All governors have received training on equality and diversity. The chair of governors is trained also in headteacher appraisal and safer recruitment.
- Governors are aware of the importance of the use of additional funding, such as pupil premium and the Year 7 numeracy and literacy catch-up funding. They are aware of how funding has been used. However, governors are less clear about the benefits of pupil premium funding for those other than the least able and more vulnerable pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Appropriate procedures to recruit staff are in place and all statutory checks are completed. Thorough risk assessments are undertaken for activities and events.
- Staff have completed all recent and relevant training, and know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. Leaders respond in a timely manner to any concerns and work closely with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils receive support. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for in school.
- Pupils say that incidences of bullying are rare and that they are dealt with effectively by staff. Pupils are confident that there are a number of ways that they can express any concerns they have. This includes talking to adults and the use of the 'Confide' computer button.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and know about internet safety and the dangers of social media. There is a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health (PSHE) education which teaches pupils to improve their lifestyles, for example by eating well, reducing stress and promoting healthy living.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved over time and is now good. As a result, key stage 3 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, now make good progress.
- Staff have high expectations of their pupils. The majority of pupils take pride in their work. Pupils strive to produce work which meets those high standards of staff. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive.
- Challenging targets ensure that pupils make faster rates of progress this year, including the most able and most-able disadvantaged pupils.
- Teaching is good in the majority of subjects and pupils are making better progress than historically. This is because of focused training and a renewed determination by staff to improve outcomes for pupils. Middle leaders are actively involved in quality assuring teaching and learning, and are positive role models for staff and pupils.
- Teaching is improving in mathematics as staffing is now more stable. The new head of department has introduced schemes of work which build on mastery skills developed at primary school and hone the skills needed for success in the new GCSE examinations.

Strong leadership of mathematics and improving teaching are having a positive effect on pupils' focus, progress and attitudes to learning.

- Teachers' strong subject knowledge and skilful questioning enable staff to routinely plan activities which support pupils' learning. Opportunities for extended writing are regularly built into lessons, for example in science. This helps pupils to edit their work and write at length. Teachers' up-to-date knowledge of recent changes to examination specifications ensures that pupils are suitably prepared for examinations.
- Regular assessment cycles give clear milestones of progress for pupils and teachers. In-depth analysis of gaps in pupils' knowledge enables accurate and timely interventions to be put into place. Leaders are confident that these new systems, once tailored and embedded by departments, will significantly improve outcomes.
- Most teachers follow the school's assessment policy and offer clear, constructive guidance to pupils. When pupils respond to this feedback, mistakes are rarely repeated. However, literacy errors are occasionally not identified and this prevents pupils from using accurate subject-specific terminology.
- Reading is well developed across Years 7 and 8. Pupils are encouraged to read in lessons and form time. Pupils who struggle to read fluently are taught to use phonic skills and are rapidly catching up with their peers.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to support the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or difficulties. Teaching assistants often integrate seamlessly into the classroom and work well with teachers to accelerate the progress of individual pupils.
- Homework is set in line with the school's policy in the majority of subjects. However, there is some variation in teachers' adherence to the school's homework policy. A number of pupils commented on this variation, which was also evident in some books. Some pupils commented that homework was sometimes simple enough to be finished in class and some felt that it was not set regularly enough, for example in religious education.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The caring and inclusive ethos of the school provides an environment where pupils feel safe and well cared for. Staff know pupils well and relationships in the school are strong. Pupils are respectful to each other and know that they are expected to treat each other kindly.
- Pupils say that they are taught by staff to be friendly and to respect everyone, regardless of differences. Pupils are committed to the Catholic ethos of the school and have a respect for the religious beliefs of others.
- Instances of bullying are rare, and pupils report that they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils told inspectors that there is a wide range of adults in school whom they can talk to if they have any concerns, and that they feel well supported in school.

- Pupils are confident and articulate. They wear their uniform smartly and are keen to take on responsibilities and contribute to a variety of community and faith-based activities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are actively involved in a wide range of opportunities to develop their understanding and prepare them to be confident adults who make a positive contribution to society.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In lessons, pupils listen well to each other and are accepting of others' views and opinions. Pupils work well together and support each other in challenging tasks, often showing resilience and independence.
- The 'guidance programme' to improve behaviour further has had a positive impact on reducing poor behaviour. Behaviour logs show a falling pattern of unacceptable behaviour, and the number of fixed-term exclusions has also decreased significantly.
- There has been a spike in permanent exclusions this year. This is due to the raised expectations of all staff and the consistent implementation of the new guidance procedure. This procedure clearly outlines the school's firm and effective approach to maintaining consistently good behaviour. Evidence seen by inspectors clearly demonstrates that leaders exclude only as a last resort or in the case of serious isolated incidents.
- Leaders ensure appropriate off-site alternative provision for a small number of pupils for part of the week. Placements are closely matched to the interests and needs of pupils. Learning mentors accompany pupils to their placements to ensure that attendance and behaviour are good. These placements provide pupils with valuable experience. The vast majority of pupils then secure places on college and training courses to continue their education.
- Attendance of pupils is just below national average. Attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average, but is showing consistent improvement over time.
- The proportion of pupils who joined the school at the start of Year 7 and who are regularly absent from school has reduced significantly this year.
- Attendance of a minority of pupils needs to improve. The attendance of pupils who join the school in key stage 4, sometimes after substantial disruption to their education, is lower than others in the school. However, the intensive support and personalised pathways in place for these pupils is effective.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in the majority of lessons. They arrive ready to learn and are generally willing to cooperate and take part in learning. When teaching does not challenge or sustain the interests of pupils, the behaviour of a minority of pupils deteriorates. Some low-level disruption also occurs when lessons are taught by temporary teachers. Leaders support new staff to ensure that the behaviour policy is consistently applied.
- Behaviour around school is generally calm and purposeful. Some pupils and staff discussed occasional more boisterous behaviours on corridors which can lead to

jostling. Leaders are aware of congested areas and have increased staff presence on corridors and introduced one-way systems to address this concern.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Attainment has risen steadily over the past three years. An increasing proportion of pupils now leave school with good GCSE grades in English and mathematics. Progress for pupils has also improved in the past three years, from significantly below average to in line with national average, for pupils in 2016.
- However, this was not the case for disadvantaged pupils. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils made significantly less progress than their non-disadvantaged peers nationally overall. Disadvantaged pupils also made poor progress in mathematics, science, humanities and English Baccalaureate subjects. The progress of disadvantaged pupils was in the bottom 10% of schools nationally in mathematics and humanities. However, progress in modern foreign languages was particularly strong.
- Progress of disadvantaged pupils is now improving in a range of subjects. There is still some variability across subjects and within departments at key stage 4, such as in mathematics.
- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to support the progress of low-ability and vulnerable disadvantaged pupils. Leaders recognise that more support is needed for other disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged, to ensure that their progress is maximised and that they achieve their targets.
- Progress for current pupils from different starting points is improving at key stage 4 in the vast majority of subjects. As a result of improved teaching, significant curriculum changes and stronger middle leadership, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make sustained and consistent progress across a wide range of subjects. This includes the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make the progress expected of them. Pupils who have statements or education, health and care plans continue to make good progress. Additional funding is used effectively through providing tailored pathways and support from learning assistants and mentors.
- Support for pupils who need to catch up in reading and mathematics has had a positive effect. These pupils are developing rapidly their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils are now on track and are catching up with their peers.
- Leaders have developed new methods for assessing pupils and setting them challenging and highly aspirational targets. Teachers check judgements about the standards of pupils' work and new assessment measures with colleagues in school and with teachers from other schools. As a result, teachers are confident that the positive progress being seen in Years 7, 8 and 9 is accurate.
- Reading is promoted strongly across the school. Independent reading is a regular activity in tutor time. Dedicated reading lessons for Years 7 and 8 pupils are also taught in the library and learning resource centre. Pupils who struggle with reading are taught using phonics to ensure continuity of learning from primary school.
- A comprehensive programme of careers information, advice and guidance ensures that the vast majority of pupils leave school having secured further education, employment

or training. In 2016, all pupils continued in education or employment, including those who joined late in school and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders prepare pupils exceedingly well for the next stages in their educational journey.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is well led. During their time in sixth form, students are provided with a range of opportunities and experiences that enable them to develop into mature and competent young adults. Students value the care and quality of teaching that they receive.
- Students enjoy being part of the sixth form and are good role models for younger pupils. Students who spoke with inspectors say that they thrive in the ethos of the school and enjoy taking part in activities such as collective worship.
- Students' behaviour in the sixth form is good. Students have positive relationships with their teachers and peers. They engage well with their learning. Small group sizes mean that students receive many opportunities for individualised support from teachers.
- A small number of students begin their studies having not attained good GCSE grades in English or mathematics. The proportion who make good progress and improve their grades during the sixth form is significantly higher than average. This is a real strength of sixth-form provision.
- Regular, impartial careers advice enables students to explore possible career paths and ensures that they are well prepared for their future. Participation in work experience is well planned and aspirational. In almost all cases, students move on to their choice in higher education, training or employment, with an increasing number of students gaining places at prestigious universities.
- Outcomes for A levels in 2016 were below the national average, but above the minimum standard threshold. Progress of students studying vocational courses was above average and continues to be strong, particularly for disadvantaged students.
- Leaders have recognised the areas in need of development. They have swiftly implemented strategies that are rapidly improving the progress of students in Years 12 and 13. A new team approach involving sixth-form leaders, senior leaders, heads of faculties and form tutors has been established. Consequently, intensive academic and pastoral support is provided for pupils needing intervention. This secures good attendance and good progress for current learners.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time is good. Teachers' evaluations suggest that most pupils are on track to achieve well and meet their target grades. Teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge. High expectations, coupled with accurate assessments, lead to current pupils making strong progress.

School details

Unique reference number	111457
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10032428

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,434
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Wilson
Headteacher	Wendy White
Telephone number	0151 424 2139
Website	www.saintspeterandpaul.halton.sch.uk
Email address	admin@saintspeterandpaul.halton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 April 2014

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average-sized secondary school for pupils from 11 to 18 years.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than average. A number of pupils are supported through the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average, but the proportion who have a statement and/or education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school currently uses the alternative providers Riverside College and Positive Futures to contribute to the education of a small number of pupils.
- In 2016, the school met the government's current floor standards for key stage 4, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 11.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a wide range of subjects in different year groups. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons and tutorial periods.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to listen to their views, both formally and informally.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, newly qualified teachers and the chair of governors. Inspectors also met with a representative from the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- Inspectors also spoke by telephone to a representative from the local authority and representatives from the alternative providers that work with the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation that covered: information about pupils' attainment and progress; the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan; minutes of meetings of the governing body and records relating to teaching and learning, pupils' attendance and behaviour, and safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaks, lunchtimes, lessons, tutorial times and at each end of the school day. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and looked at a sample of their books jointly with leaders.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in the 112 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as comments received via the free-text facility on Parent View. Inspectors also took into account the 100 responses to a questionnaire for staff and the 110 responses to a questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

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