

Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School

Station Road, Bamber Bridge, Preston PR5 6PB

Inspection dates 4–5 November 2015

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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- In a relatively short time, the school has made a successful journey from requiring improvement to becoming a good school.
- The school's leaders, governors and staff share the headteacher's determination to make the school as good as it can be for each individual pupil.
- The school's strong moral ethos promotes pupils' good behaviour and exemplary relationships between teachers, pupils and their peers.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. It supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well.
- The school's high-quality support from staff for particular groups of pupils is very successful in improving pupils' reading, writing and mathematics.
- Senior leaders and governors have tackled ineffective teaching so that teaching, learning and assessment are now good.
- Governors are proud of the school. They constantly mount a strong challenge to senior leaders.
- The progress of most pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, those who are disabled or have special educational needs and the most able is improving rapidly across a wide range of subjects and is close to that of other pupils nationally.
- Safeguarding is effective. The vast majority of pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school.
- The staff and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Outcomes are not yet outstanding for all pupils. This is because some teachers do not challenge pupils effectively.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet outstanding. Teachers' questioning of pupils does not always deepen pupils' thinking.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and increase pupils' progress, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information effectively, to adjust work when pupils are ready to move on
 - asking probing questions that make pupils think more deeply
 - providing pupils with opportunities to grapple with challenging ideas that extend their knowledge and understanding
 - making sure that pupils have ample time to reflect on their learning and articulate their ideas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The good leadership of senior and middle leaders, and governors has been pivotal in ensuring that the school has successfully completed its journey to good. Governors and other staff share a clear vision that places the pupils at the centre of everything that the school does. Leaders have established a calm and harmonious environment in which pupils thrive; leaders are committed to ensuring that every individual pupil achieves as well as he or she can.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work.
- Leaders have set in place very robust systems to check the quality of the school's work, which give senior leaders a very clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas that need to improve. This helps senior leaders work very closely with heads of faculty, for example, to challenge any weak teaching.
- The quality of teaching and learning has been strengthened in some subjects that did not perform well in 2014, such as French, humanities and drama. Senior leaders and governors have also made effective use of performance management to improve teaching. The many opportunities teachers have to update their skills have ensured that the quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. It is broad and balanced with academic and vocational courses that are very precisely matched to the changing needs and ambitions of pupils. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and new courses have been introduced, for example, statistics and computer science, to stretch the most-able learners. Pupils therefore make good progress and all move on to the further education or training courses of their choice at the end of Year 11. Pupils also appreciate the wide variety of activities provided by the school before school, at lunchtimes and at the end of the school day.
- The school makes effective use of Year 7 catch-up funding and pupil premium through its provision of an enriched literacy and numeracy curriculum for pupils who need extra help with these skills. As a result, many of these pupils improve their reading ages by a whole year in six months. Provisional information held by the school indicates that these pupils are currently on track to make significantly better progress than in 2015 in English, mathematics and in a wide range of other subjects.
- The curriculum caters particularly well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils gain a good understanding of life and beliefs in their own and other communities, for example, through visiting a partner school in Ghana. This helps them to appreciate the impact of inequality in different parts of the world.
- Senior leaders see the promotion of fundamental British values such as tolerance and respect as central to preventing radicalisation and extremism. The school provides a safe space where pupils can discuss controversial issues and build their confidence to challenge extremist beliefs and ideologies. The school's work with the Sisters for Sisters organisation helps pupils to understand, for example, that Islam is a peaceful religion that abhors violence. Pupils learn much about democracy and enthusiastically use the school council and other opportunities that the school provides for them to express their views.
- Pupils take up enthusiastically the rich variety of sporting, dramatic and musical activities that the school has to offer at lunchtimes and after the end of the school day.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is very knowledgeable about the school. Carefully considered links with faculties and other key areas of the school's work are helping governors to extend their knowledge of the school still further. Governors have reviewed their skills and taken steps to ensure that all governors occupy roles in which they can be most effective. Where there are gaps, they have quickly recruited new members who have the appropriate skills.
 - Governors keep a watchful eye on the effectiveness of teaching and, together with senior leaders, use performance management rigorously to drive up the quality of teaching. They hold heads of faculty to account very effectively for their pupils' progress and mount a good level of challenge to senior leaders
 - Governors support senior leaders whole-heartedly in refusing pay progression when targets are missed and in taking hard staffing decisions if teachers fail to improve their practice after appropriate support has been provided.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures are clear and staff are appropriately

trained. Leaders and other staff take rigorous action to identify pupils at risk and to support them. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, felt that their children were safe and well cared for by the school. They were very satisfied with the information provided by the school on pupils' progress.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and teachers use it very well to enthuse pupils and engage them in their learning. Teachers' planning is effective and generally well informed by the school's very thorough systems for checking pupils' progress. As a result, teachers show generally good knowledge of what pupils can and cannot yet do.
- Sometimes teachers do not use this knowledge effectively enough to recognise when pupils have acquired and consolidated their learning and are ready to move on to different and more complex tasks. This is partly because teachers do not use a wide enough variety of questioning techniques to assess pupils' learning and adapt their teaching accordingly.
- Occasionally, pupils do not have enough opportunities to grapple with challenging ideas in their subjects, so that they can reach higher levels of knowledge, understanding and progress.
- Many teachers engross pupils in challenging problems and give them plenty of time to reflect deeply on the most appropriate approaches they might apply in solving them. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson on the manipulation of surds, pupils were inspired by a demonstration and very probing questions. Expectations of pupils were high, but closely matched to what each pupil could do, as the teacher encouraged the class to try the most challenging questions.
- Good teaching in the school develops pupils' resilience and provides them with opportunities to develop their communication skills effectively. In a Year 9 English lesson, pupils were preparing their opening arguments for a debate on a range of topical questions, including the plight of Syrian refugees, China's 'one-child' policy and homophobic attitudes in the media. Pupils were excited to tackle these real-life issues and to have to defend a point of view with which they personally disagreed. For some pupils this was a real moral dilemma and led to some very mature reflections and deep understanding. Many pupils said they had found it fascinating.
- Teachers mark pupils' work diligently and comply consistently with the school's marking policy. Teachers make clear to pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Strong structures and policies are in place to provide a safe place in which pupils can focus on their learning and become confident and self-assured. These well-developed personal skills contribute greatly to pupils' positive attitudes to learning and have a strong impact on their progress.
- Pupils are eager to learn and to achieve well. They are self-disciplined, working well together in lessons and complete tasks and activities quickly and with enjoyment. They appreciate opportunities to learn from each other as well as from their teachers, by sharing their ideas. When this happens, pupils make very insightful comments in sophisticated language.
- Pupils are proud of the school and take an active part in all that it has to offer. They wear their uniform smartly and take pride in their work. Pupils show respect for their teachers and classmates and, with very few exceptions, conduct themselves very well in and around the school throughout the day. On the very few occasions when teaching does not engage their interest, the concentration of a few pupils wanes and minor lapses in their good behaviour occur.
- Pupils value greatly teachers' approachability and the high-quality care and support that teachers and other adults provide for them. Pupils often speak of the school as a big family and say that there is always a range of adults to whom they can turn when they need help with their learning and other concerns that may affect their attitudes in school.
- The school's strategies to improve attendance are recognised within the local authority as good practice. The attendance of most pupils is now above average. Those with previously low attendance, for example a few of the disadvantaged pupils or those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, have

improved their attendance rapidly since the last inspection.

- Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe and secure from bullying. They have a good knowledge of different kinds of bullying. Pupils say that their fellow pupils and staff do not tolerate prejudice-based language, or any other discrimination against members of the school community because of their differences. Pupils are well supported in learning how to use technology safely, whether when searching the internet or using mobile phones.
- A themed programme of assemblies and tutorials, as well as the personal, social and health and citizenship programme, support pupils' growing sense of right and wrong and their awareness of and sensitivity towards different ways of life in the wider community.
- Displays around school, visits to universities and visits from former pupils who have been successful in their personal and professional lives inspire pupils to work hard and become active citizens.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's behaviour policy is clear and teachers comply with it very consistently. Pupils know exactly the expectations teachers have of their behaviour and of the consequences if they fall short of them.
- Pupils arrive at school and lessons promptly and ready to learn, so that no time is wasted. Senior leaders have taken measures, such as a one-way system, to ensure that most movement around the school is quick, quiet and sensible.
- Teachers have clear expectations that pupils will make a strong contribution to their own and others' learning and to the extensive charitable work to which the school is committed. Pupils take up this challenge with great enthusiasm.
- Dedicated funding from the pupil premium to improve the behaviour of a small number of disadvantaged pupils has been very effective. For example, the number of exclusions for this group has declined steadily since the previous inspection.
- The behaviour, attendance and progress of the few pupils in Year 10 and Year 11, who receive part of their education away from the school site, are rigorously checked by the school and there are strong links with the providers to ensure pupils' safety.
- All pupils move on to further education, employment or training when they leave school and very few of them do not complete their studies. This is because of the high quality of independent and school-based advice and guidance that pupils receive at key points, about their options for the next phase of their education or training.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The good progress that pupils make prepares them well for the next stage in their education.
- The results of the 2014 GCSE examinations indicated that most pupils made and exceeded progress in line with or above the national average in most subjects, with the exception of languages and humanities. Gaps in progress between different groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged, narrowed or closed.
- A few pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs also did not make enough progress in 2014, largely as a result of limited learning due to low attendance. The attendance and progress of this group improved in 2015. The continuing good progress of this group was evident during the inspection, in their response to their work and in its good quality.
- Provisional information held by the school shows that pupils' performance overall in the 2015 examinations in English and mathematics was lower than in 2014, including for disadvantaged pupils.
- Outcomes in subjects which underperformed in 2014, for example drama and French, improved considerably because of stronger leadership that holds teachers more rigorously to account for their pupils' progress. A strong system of coaching by an outstanding practitioner has also improved teaching and progress in a range of subjects. Pupils also continue to achieve well in sciences.
- Heads of faculty and teachers have responded swiftly to the dip in attainment and progress with a close analysis of the examination questions in which pupils did not achieve well in 2015. This has led to changes in staffing and new groupings of pupils to enable a sharp focus on, and specialist teaching in, the specific areas where pupils need to improve.
- The school's successful and timely actions since the 2015 examination results are reflected in pupils' progress seen during the inspection. Written work in books, conversations with pupils about their work, and

the school's information on current pupils' achievement show typically good progress.

- Pupils are able to respond thoughtfully, in speaking and in writing, to increasingly complex work over time, when they have the opportunity. Pupils' extended writing is particularly good in science as they move up the school.
- The school's regular collection and analysis of information about pupils' progress gives leaders and managers great confidence in the accuracy and reliability of their predictions of how well pupils are likely to achieve. This is because of robust in-school and external moderation of teachers' marking.
- The expected progress of current Year 11 pupils in English and mathematics is improving strongly and is predicted to be well above the progress made by pupils in school in 2015. The proportion of pupils making better than expected progress in these subjects is also improving. Current pupils' work confirms that the school's predictions are well-founded.
- Similarly, in a wide range of other subjects, gaps in progress are closing rapidly for specific groups of pupils. Disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs make good progress.
- The most-able pupils generally make good progress but the school recognises that higher proportions of these pupils could achieve even more. Senior leaders have adjusted the curriculum so that it has a strong focus on raising the aspirations of these pupils and providing them with more challenging teaching. These actions are beginning to show a positive impact on the progress of the most-able pupils.
- The progress of pupils in Key Stage 3 is tracked with equal rigour to that in Key Stage 4. Information from the school's records and from inspection evidence, such as pupils' written work in books and tests as well as conversations with pupils about their work, also point to improving outcomes in these year groups.
- Senior leaders are quick to identify pupils at risk of missing their targets and put in timely support for them. For example, a Year 9 summer school and additional mentoring helped to prepare pupils well for the challenge of GCSE work. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support such pupils with focused work in lessons. Middle leaders have put in place very effective initiatives to speed up the progress of pupils who need extra support to develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils who are supported by these initiatives commonly improve their reading ages by a year's progress in six months.
- Pupils who are educated away from the school site for part of the week gain a range of Level 1 vocational qualifications that give them a clear route into further education. They also follow GCSE courses in English, mathematics, science, religious studies and two other options back in school.

School details

Unique reference number	119784
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10006571

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	673
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs F Fordyce
Headteacher	Mr Martin Reynolds
Telephone number	01772 339813
Website	http://www.st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk/
Email address	info@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average secondary school
- The school is a mixed comprehensive school in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford.
- Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- There are fewer girls than nationally (but the proportion is increasing). The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and therefore supported by the pupil premium is below the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils or of those who have special educational needs is broadly similar to the national average.
- The school uses two sources of off-site provision. A small number of pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 attend Shaftesbury High School for part of the week. The school is a short-stay school for pupils with medical and behavioural concerns. A few other pupils attend Preston College for part of the week. They follow Level 1 courses in construction, motor vehicle maintenance and hair and beauty. Pupils follow GCSE English and mathematics courses and a range of other subjects in Brownedge St Mary's for the rest of the week.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Three of the four inspectors spent two days in the school. The fourth inspector spent only the first day of the inspection in the school.
- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including from observations of teaching, some of which were undertaken with senior leaders.
- Inspectors also visited an assembly and some tutorial periods.
- Meetings were held with school staff, including the headteacher and senior and other leaders in charge of aspects of the school's work. Inspectors also met the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, other governors and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also spoke with pupils in formal interviews and lessons and informally at lunch and breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered a large variety of documentation related to the school's work: improvement plans; the school's view of its performance and information concerning pupils' attainment, progress and attendance. Inspectors also scrutinised records concerning safeguarding, the quality of teaching and learning and of pupils' behaviour. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in a range of subjects during lessons.
- Inspectors also analysed 167 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and 49 responses to staff questionnaires. Additionally, inspectors considered the school's own surveys of pupils' and parents' views about the school.

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