

# St Matthew's RC High School

Nuthurst Road, Moston, Manchester M40 0EW

## Inspection dates

22–23 September 2015

## 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

Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Students' achievement requires improvement. Their progress, especially in mathematics, is not rapid enough. Achievement varies too much within and between subjects, classes and year groups. This is because teachers' expectations of what students can do are sometimes too low and work lacks the right level of challenge.
- The most-able students, some students who are disabled or who have special educational needs and disadvantaged girls do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teaching requires improvement. Despite the good practice seen in several subjects, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not been consistently good enough to compensate fully for previous underachievement.
- Students' behaviour requires improvement because some students do not have positive attitudes to learning. Occasionally, low-level disruption occurs when teaching fails to engage their interest.
- Overall attendance is slightly below average and the school has not resolved quickly enough the persistent absence of a small group of students.
- The actions taken by senior leaders and governors to tackle the variation in students' achievement and in the quality of teaching have not yet resulted in good achievement for all groups of students.

### The school has the following strengths

- High-quality support to keep students safe is a strength of the school.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students are effective.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school's work. Students are keen to serve the school and wider community, and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Senior leaders and governors have brought about recent improvement in some subjects, for example languages, humanities and sciences.
- The curriculum is a strength; it includes a broad range of academic and vocational courses to which all students have access. This ensures that most students move on to further education, training and employment after Year 11.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve, especially the most able
  - ensuring that all students are provided with appropriately challenging work that deepens their thinking.
- Ensure that all middle leaders and teachers use information about students' progress consistently well, so that the attainment and progress of all groups of students swiftly improves.
- Urgently raise standards in mathematics by ensuring that all teachers of mathematics can confidently teach students a wider range of approaches and skills that students can apply to solve mathematical problems.
- Ensure that senior leaders intensify their efforts to improve the attendance of all students, especially those who are persistently absent from school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders' roles and responsibilities have been restructured and more clearly defined. Many leaders at all levels, including those in charge of subjects, need time and training to settle into their new areas of work. Senior leaders have strengthened some systems for holding teachers to account for students' progress but these actions have not yet shown full impact. Leaders know that they must intensify their efforts to secure consistently good or better outcomes in tests and examinations for all students.
- Senior leaders provide regular, high-quality training opportunities to improve teachers' practice. However, opportunities to share existing good practice within and across subjects are not used effectively enough to raise the achievement of all students.
- The stronger systems that have been introduced to hold subject leaders and other teachers to account for students' progress give senior leaders and, increasingly, subject leaders themselves a generally accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Senior leaders have also sharpened measures for checking students' progress and teachers' performance. Senior leaders and governors have used performance management rigorously to refuse salary progression for teachers when students do not meet their targets. This is beginning to improve standards in a range of subjects, including mathematics.
- Senior leaders can point to effective use of Year 7 catch-up funding, which is helping to improve the literacy skills of students who enter the school with low attainment in reading and writing. Gaps are not closing rapidly for some students who receive support from the pupil premium funding.
- Students have good opportunities to practise their skills in reading, extended writing and speaking across most subjects, but teachers miss opportunities to follow up students' errors in spelling or grammar when marking their work. Students do not have enough chances to practise mathematical skills in all their subjects. Leaders recognise the need to improve students' mathematical skills across subjects and have appointed a coordinator to lead this work.
- The headteacher has established a strong culture, shared by other senior leaders and governors, that places the students and their families, and in particular their welfare, at the centre of the school's ambition. The impact of this culture is seen in the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced; it provides a good choice of academic and vocational courses and prepares students well for life in modern Britain. Students learn about British values such as democracy, for example, through mock elections, themed assemblies and tutor time, as well as in a wide range of subjects.
- Students appreciate the independent careers information, advice and guidance that they receive from Year 9 upwards, when they are selecting options for future studies or employment. The success of this guidance is reflected in the high proportion of students who move into further education, training or employment after Year 11. The school rightly plans to extend this provision into the lower years.
- The school takes its responsibilities to promote equality of opportunity very seriously. Students have open access to all subjects of the curriculum. During the inspection they showed a strong awareness that no discrimination of any kind is tolerated by the school.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors know well the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are deeply involved in planning improvements. They have worked hard with senior leaders to resolve long-standing weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics but improvements have been too slow.
  - Governors have a particularly strong understanding of financial matters and have challenged the school effectively on budgetary questions when necessary. They are aware of how the pupil premium funding is spent and have some knowledge of its impact on students' progress. Governors are actively seeking to make the governing body more effective by auditing governors' skills and making new appointments where there are vacancies.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across and within all subjects and for different groups of students. Leaders at all levels know that this is limiting the progress of some students, notably the most able, some disadvantaged girls and some students who have special educational needs.
- Students make limited progress in mathematics, where there has been a significant turnover of staff in previous years. In response, senior leaders and governors have received support from the local authority for raising achievement in mathematics. They have also invested heavily in new appointments to the mathematics department, which are beginning to make improvements. These actions came too late to be reflected in the 2014 outcomes, but are evident in improvements in 2015 and especially in projections for 2016 for students' achievement across the school.
- Where teaching is weak, teachers lack confidence in tapping into students' natural curiosity. Students do not always reach the highest levels because tasks are sometimes too easy or too hard and students do not learn to take the initiative in exploring and applying different ways of working. Students' progress also slows when teachers do not recognise that different students are ready, for example, to move from revising simple concepts to investigating more complex ones. Students, especially the most able, then become disengaged from their work and sometimes take part in low-level disruption.
- There is some good and outstanding teaching in the school on which senior leaders and governors are building. When students have a clear view of what is expected of them, they quickly set to work and are keen to involve themselves in their learning. They enjoy responding to questions from teachers that challenge them to think deeply about important ideas in a subject. This enthusiasm for learning is evident in the written work of these students and their good progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare requires improvement. Many aspects of students' personal attributes are positive, but these do not ensure that all of them make the best progress of which they are capable during their time in school.
- The school provides a safe and harmonious environment for learning and promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Students whom inspectors met during the inspection said that they felt safe in and around the school. They learn through assemblies, tutor time and in a range of subjects how to recognise the risks of life in modern Britain and how to keep themselves safe.
- The few parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, had some concerns about bullying. A small group of parents who met with the lead inspector did not have concerns about bullying and expressed their confidence in the school. Students were also clear that incidents of bullying of all kinds are very rare. This is ensured by the many adults and student mentors available to support students, through the house system and mixed-age tutor groups. These contribute much to students' safety, well-being and generally positive relationships with each other.
- Most students are proud of the school. Many students contribute well to the life of the school and its community through, for example, taking responsibility for others as mentors and 'guardian angels' to younger students. They take part in charity fundraising, a wide range of sports and musical or dramatic performances and relish the wealth of after-school and lunchtime activities that the school provides.
- The personal development, well-being and care of students who attend off-site provision is regularly checked by the school and enables most students to move into appropriate courses that extend their skills after Year 11.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Current overall attendance is just below the national average. A core of students have persistently poor attendance. The school has taken action to tackle and try to improve the attendance of these and other students. However, staff recognise that more work is urgently needed to improve the attendance of disadvantaged students, especially girls, and some students who are disabled or have special educational

needs.

- The attitudes to learning of some students are not always positive, especially when teaching is not effective. When this is the case, students' concentration wanes and occasionally low-level disruption slows their progress and that of others.
- Most students wear their uniform smartly and arrive at school equipped and ready to work. The majority of students are generally courteous and helpful, showing respect towards each other, their teachers and visiting adults.

## Outcomes for pupils

## require improvement

- Students join the school with standards that are generally in line with national averages. Too many students have not made enough progress over time because the quality of teaching has not been strong enough to support consistently good achievement in all subjects, especially in mathematics, and at both key stages. Inspection evidence confirms that the achievement of students currently in the school is stronger than that of those who have recently left.
- Written work over a period of time, seen in students' books during the inspection, indicates that students are not always challenged to do their best. This is because some teachers do not take account, in planning students' learning, of what students already know or can do.
- In 2014 the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was below average and few students made or exceeded the progress expected of them in either subject. Too many boys, disadvantaged girls, the most-able students and some students who have special educational needs failed to make expected progress from their starting points.
- Gaps widened in 2014 between the progress of disadvantaged students and others in the school and others nationally. The school's own information indicates that, while gaps remain, they are set to reduce significantly in 2016.
- Information held by the school shows that, in 2015, the achievement of Year 11 students rose on a range of measures, when compared to students in the previous year. The school's evidence points to the proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes including English and mathematics rising by around 10% in the 2016 examinations. Most of these students are making faster progress from their starting points.
- While the progress of current students still varies between subjects and year groups, the school's new tracking systems point to improved progress in a range of subjects in Key Stage 4, notably in sciences, English literature, religious education, history, geography and languages. This is having a rapid and significant impact on students' achievement of the English Baccalaureate.
- Over the last three years, students' achievement at Key Stage 3 has risen significantly and steadily. This is because the school has put in place strong foundations in Key Stage 3 to improve students' achievement throughout the school. The school's strong focus on improving teachers' use of information about students' progress has led, over the last three years, to students' rapid progress in English, mathematics and particularly in science.
- The very few students who speak English as an additional language make broadly similar progress to other students.
- Over time, the most-able students have not made the progress that they should, given their starting points. However, the school's own data show that, in 2015, outcomes for these students in some subjects, including mathematics, improved.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has enabled the majority of the students who receive the extra support to improve their reading age rapidly and securely. The impact of the pupil premium funding has not been strong enough for attainment gaps to narrow as quickly as they should for some disadvantaged students.
- Despite the variation in the progress of different groups, almost all students are able to move on to their choice of further education, training or employment after Year 11. This includes the very small number of students who attend alternative provision. This is because the school provides many opportunities for students to practise their reading, writing and spelling skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105577
<b>Local authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	10000494

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,139
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Worrall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kevin Hogan
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 681 6178
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.smrchs.com">www.smrchs.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:contact@smrchs.com">contact@smrchs.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26–27 September 2012

## Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage and very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is lower than average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding to help students known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school uses four organisations as alternative providers of education off the school site for 12 students. They are: the Manchester Pupil Referral Unit, The Lighthouse Group, the Harpurhey Alternative Provision School and the Leo Kelly Centre, which is part of the Manchester Hospital School.
- In 2014, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, some of which were undertaken with senior leaders.
- Inspectors also visited an assembly and a tutor period.
- Meetings were held with school staff, including the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff in charge of aspects of the school's work. Inspectors also met members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority, as well as a small group of parents. Inspectors also spoke with students 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 students' attainment, progress and attendance. Inspectors also scrutinised records concerning safeguarding, students' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors looked at students' work during lessons and at a further sample of students' written work in English and mathematics.
- Inspectors also analysed 18 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View.

## Inspection team

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