

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic College, A Voluntary Academy

Wallasey Village, Wallasey, Merseyside CH45 3LN

Inspection dates:

8–9 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have positive relationships with each other and their teachers. Pupils behave well during breaktimes and lunchtimes. In lessons and around the school, most pupils follow instructions. They are typically respectful of each other and their teachers.

Pupils who spoke with us said that they feel safe. They told us that bullying does not happen very often. If it does, they say that staff sort it out quickly. Leaders and staff ensure that pupils and sixth-form students are cared for well. Pupils enjoy taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and a wide range of after-school activities, including sports and drama.

Leaders and governors want pupils to do as well as they can. There are clear signs of improvement, for example in pupils' behaviour and in pupils' progress in vocational subjects. However, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, do not achieve as well as they should in many of their GCSE subjects.

Staff are working tirelessly to improve the attendance of pupils. That said, many pupils do not attend school often enough.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Senior leaders have made a real difference to the school since it became an academy. The large majority of parents and carers are positive about the improvements that have taken place. Leaders ensure that staff receive high-quality training. Staff spoke highly of the support that they received from another local secondary school in the trust. They say that school leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Governors and trustees support school leaders well. They ask leaders probing questions. This is contributing to the school's ongoing development.

Leaders made sure that the considerable number of pupils who joined the school at different points in their education received a warm welcome. These pupils are safe, settled and part of the St Mary's community.

Pupils told us that behaviour has improved a lot because staff have the same expectations and apply the school's rules fairly. Exclusions are falling. However, several pupils reported that some of their lessons are disrupted and it depends on which teacher they have.

Pupils' attendance is improving but remains below the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders work closely with families and monitor attendance closely. The attendance of individual pupils who are regularly absent from school is improving.

Personal, social, health and economic education lessons enable pupils to learn about democracy and respect. Pupils relish the opportunity to go on trips and visits and raise money for charities. They receive helpful information, advice and guidance to help them prepare for their future.

Students in the sixth form behave very well. They benefit from small classes and feel well supported with their learning. They value the opportunity to choose from a wide range of academic and vocational subjects. Students' progress on A-level courses has been weaker than on vocational courses in recent years. In response to this, leaders have improved schemes of work in the sixth form and provided subject-specific training for teachers. Consequently, students are learning and remembering more than in the past. Most Year 13 students go on to education, employment or training.

Leaders identify and cater for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) increasingly well. Staff ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of these pupils and that they are well supported in lessons.

Leaders have made changes to the key stage 4 curriculum so that more pupils can study a modern foreign language. Consequently, the proportion of pupils taking the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) has risen significantly. In Year 10, around 75% of pupils are taking the EBacc.

The curriculum offer in key stage 3 is not as broad as the national curriculum intends because pupils do not currently get the chance to study computing.

Pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not achieve as well as they should in external examinations. A weaker curriculum in the past left pupils with gaps in their knowledge. Until recently, the constant turnaround of staff has disrupted pupils' learning journey. Pupils are now learning more than they have done before. This is because, staffing is more settled than in the past. In addition, leaders have reviewed curriculum plans in all subjects. For example, in English, teachers understand what pupils have to know and when this should happen. This is helping them to build pupils' knowledge securely over time.

However, the curriculums in some subjects are not planned well enough to help pupils build on their knowledge and recall key information as they move through year groups.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders carry out checks to ensure that all staff are safe to work with pupils. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and know what to do when a pupil may be at risk. Leaders ensure that pupils are aware of any safeguarding risks in the local area. Pupils are taught about safety through the curriculum. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Leaders work well with the local authority and other agencies to ensure that pupils get the support that they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders should ensure that they provide opportunities for pupils to study computing in key stage 3 so that the school's curriculum reflects the ambitions of the national curriculum.
- Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum in all subjects in key stages 3 and 4 provides a challenging and deep education so that all pupils, and particularly disadvantaged pupils, improve their knowledge and understanding so that they can learn more and remember more.
- Leaders have been effective in reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. They need to build on recent strategies to improve pupils' attendance, particularly for those pupils who are disadvantaged.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	143554
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10110878
Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,097
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	126
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Carol Lawrence
Headteacher	Anthony Boyle
Website	www.stmaryswallasey.com/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school became an academy in November 2016. It is part of the Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust. A new chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust was appointed in June 2019.
- A considerable proportion of pupils did not join the school in Year 7. Many of these pupils had attended a nearby school which closed. Other new pupils entered the school at different times in the school year.
- The school's last section 48 inspection took place on April 2016.
- A small number of pupils attend the Aspire unit, which is the school's own alternative provision. In addition, a small number of pupils attend alternative provision at the following providers: Utopia and Wirral Hospital School.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- During the inspection, we had meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and other members of staff. We also held informal and formal discussions with many pupils and observed interactions during social times. We spoke to representatives of alternative providers used by the school. I had meetings with the CEO, chair of the trust board, chair of the local governing body and the trust's director for teaching and learning. I spoke with a representative of the Diocese of Shrewsbury on the phone.
- We reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, attendance and behaviour records and safeguarding records. We also reviewed minutes of governing body meetings.
- We analysed 40 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 36 text responses from parents, 73 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 74 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- We started the inspection by focusing on art, English, mathematics and science. We visited a sample of lessons in these subjects, met with subject leaders, scrutinised pupils' books and had discussions with teachers and a small group of pupils. On the second day of the inspection, we visited lessons in other subjects.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rachel Cave	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector
Nell Banfield	Ofsted Inspector

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