

Our Lady and St John Catholic College

North Road, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 1PY

Inspection dates 16–17 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Require improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement requires improvement. A greater proportion is on course to attain five good GCSEs in the next two years. However, after they enter the school in Year 7, the most able students make slow progress and fewer than average attain A* or A grades.
- The pupil premium grant is not spent well. The in-school gap between students who are disadvantaged and those who are deemed not to be disadvantaged is wider in Year 11 than last year. The most able students at the end of Year 6, who are also disadvantaged, make slow progress.
- The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 has improved significantly, but it is not as effective as it is in Years 10 and 11. Too many students do not make the progress they should in Years 7 to 9.
- Students do not know as much as they should about how to keep themselves safe from extremist behaviour. The school's systems to protect students are effective. As a result they feel safe.
- The proportion of students who are absent from school is still too high and too many arrive late.
- Many middle leaders are new to the college and have not been able to have an impact on improving teaching in Years 7 to 9 or in the sixth form. Some of the systems to check on the impact of teaching are not refined enough to raise standards for the most able and for the disadvantaged students.
- The sixth form is effective in enabling students to make good progress in their life skills and in developing confidence, but is less effective in raising standards in English and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher provides inspirational leadership. He has led a transformation in the quality of teaching, students' behaviour, and students' achievement in this rapidly improving school.
- Teaching and students' achievement in science and in English are good and they are improving quickly in languages, mathematics and history.
- Almost every student transfers successfully into education, employment or training.
- The pastoral care for students is of high quality. The college supports students to tackle mental health issues and other barriers to learning.
- The school's promotion and teaching of diversity has been successful in reducing incidents of derogatory name-calling and creating a culture of mutual respect. Students' behaviour is good.
- Students who have special educational needs and students who are looked after by the local authority make good progress.

Information about this inspection

- This was the fourth monitoring visit since the school became subject to special measures. It was changed to a full inspection in the first day of this inspection. Her Majesty's Inspector took into account evidence from previous visits.
- Inspectors observed teaching, alongside a member of the senior leadership team, in a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, languages, humanities, physical education and design and technology. Year 11 students were absent from school at the time of this inspection on examination leave, so inspectors took into account observations of their work undertaken during previous monitoring inspections.
- To gather the views of students, inspectors spoke with two groups formally and with others informally around the school and off site at the sixth form. They also took account of their views expressed in a student survey.
- To gather the views of parents, inspectors took into account the 29 completed Parent View surveys, as well as the 193 parents who completed a paper copy of the questions.
- An inspector met with a representative of the local authority. In addition an inspector met with representatives of the interim executive board and the diocese, the headteacher and with teachers and support staff.

Inspection team

Allan Torr, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Leigh

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Our Lady and St John is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The sixth form is very small. At the start of the year, only 18 students were on roll and this has reduced to six as the students transfer to St Mary's College. The sixth form is closing in the next five weeks, so all remaining students will transfer to the college.
- Over half of the students have been identified as disadvantaged because they are eligible for support from pupil premium funding. This figure is much higher than the national average. The pupil premium is a fund of money provided by the government to support this group of students. The group includes students who are, or have been, cared for by the local authority, and those who are eligible for free school meals.
- Close to a third of students, a proportion which is higher than the national average, have been identified as needing support, because they have special educational needs or a disability.
- A large majority of students are White British. Approximately one in every 8 students has an Indian heritage and one in every 6 a Pakistani heritage.
- The school uses St Mary's College as its sixth form provider. It also uses two pupil referral units: The Heights and St Thomas' to provide specialist teaching for some of its students.
- The acting headteacher is employed by St Patrick's Teaching School in Salford which also provides the support of its executive principal who is a National Leader of Education. Our Lady and St John also receives support from the Teaching School through specialist leaders in education.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations set by the government for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4.
- The governing body was replaced in summer 2014 by an Interim Executive Board. The National Leader of Education, the diocese and the head of school improvement in the local authority all sit on the board.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching for the most able students so that, from the end of primary school, they make rapid progress and attain A*-A in their GCSEs in each subject, by:
 - making better use of the pupil premium grant to make sure the most able disadvantaged students make accelerated progress
 - developing students' oracy skills so that they can explain, convince, justify and prove their reasoning in each subject.
- Refine the school's systems for checking on students' work and the quality of lessons so that middle leaders have an impact on raising the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form, by:
 - identifying precisely, in each subject and strands within each subject, how teachers can increase the progress of groups of students in their classes and follow this up to check that improvement has been secured
 - including students' views and their behaviour for learning more prominently in the checks on the impact of teaching.
- Extend students' knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, by:
 - learning more about how to avoid being groomed, exploited and about the dangers inherent in sending images via technology and social media (sexting)
 - learning more about how to avoid being involved in gang crime or carrying weapons or becoming involved with extreme views or radicalised groups
 - making sure students attend more frequently and that few are late for lessons.

Ensure that the website meets all national requirements and provides a platform for more frequent and

improved communication with parents and potential students.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- The acting headteacher had led the relentless pursuit of higher standards through a gentle ruthlessness which has transformed the culture of the school particularly in the last two terms, to one of accountability, responsibility and respect. One student summed up the views of many by saying ‘The reason for the improvement is the headteacher. Now all teachers meet and greet us, speak nicely to us and there is mutual respect.’ There is now an urgent need to appoint a headteacher on a substantive basis to make sure these significant improvements are not lost.
- Teachers who have struggled to have an impact on raising standards have moved on and a new staff, including leading teachers, joined the existing staff team. The leadership of teaching in Key Stage 4 has been particularly effective in raising standards of attainment by plugging gaps in students’ knowledge and skills. However, one of the reasons why leadership requires improvement is because the leadership of teaching in Years 7 to 9 has not been effective in raising standards.
- Teachers who lead subjects or an aspect of the school explained that they feel more valued and can now do their jobs because they have full access to data about students’ attainment and progress. They are trusted in their roles, but also held to account for students’ achievement in their departments. The impact of middle leadership is improving quickly. However, many middle leaders are new to the school and have not had chance to have a full impact on improving teaching, particularly in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form.
- All leaders check on students’ work and teaching in lessons frequently. They match the results to assessment information to gather an accurate view of the impact of teaching over time. These checks do not include enough references to students’ views or the impact of behaviour on their progress. Some of the checks lack precision in identifying exactly what aspect of the subject needs to be improved to increase the progress of groups of students, particularly for the most able and the disadvantaged students.
- Another reason why leadership requires improvement is because the pupil premium has not been used effectively or wisely. The references to the impact of the pupil premium for last year are missing from the website, despite this being a national requirement and the explanation of how this year’s funding of over £400,000 is used is too vague. The attainment of disadvantaged students is rising quickly and the gap between them and other students nationally is closing. However, the most able disadvantaged students at the end of Year 6 make slow progress because not enough of the funding has been spent on extending their skills and tackling their needs. The gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged has grown in the current Year 11, indicates that the grant has not been spent effectively.
- A strength of the school is its approach to tackling discrimination and fostering good relations between all, including those with protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act. The high quality pupil services team makes sure that no student falls through the net of support and makes sure all teachers know about the needs of each individual. There are procedures, for example, to make sure transgender students are safe and protected; to make sure those who are disabled have full access to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Recent ‘diversity days’ have helped to reduce incidents of racism, also of derogatory language because of faith and belief; school leaders have also taken action that has reduced the incidence of homophobic language in the school.
- The school’s systems to protect and safeguard students meet requirements and are effective. Staff are persistent in pursuing cases when obstacles arise. They have taken action to prevent students self-harming, becoming involved in potentially extremist behaviour and being forced into marriage.
- In addition to covering diversity well, the curriculum is broad, balanced and meets the needs of students. There is not enough focus as yet in the curriculum of developing students’ speaking skills or their understanding of democracy or personal safety, which remain at a basic level. However, the curriculum is being reshaped and remodelled and already has much more focus on British values of respect for others, regardless of faith, culture, or belief. The impact of these developments is showing and students have good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and are increasingly well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- There is an increasing focus on raising aspirations through the curriculum. Through a range of useful and effective careers opportunities, students experience a range of apprenticeship options, advice and guidance, including further and higher education, to help them choose their options and career paths, and to meet local and regional business representatives. There is still a need to introduce external independent advice into Years 8 and 10 and to explore further the opportunity of work experience or to develop business projects. Students make informed choices about their next steps. In 2014 only one student left

without a place in education, employment or training. The transition for students with special educational needs is particularly successful.

- Through its brokerage of support from a Teaching School, the impact of the local authority, in conjunction with the diocese, has been highly effective. In addition, the local authority has provided guidance and help to the Interim Executive Board to prevent a large budget shortfall in the next two years, and to make sure all correct procedures have been followed in tackling changes in staffing.
- The deputy headteacher has a detailed overview of the progress, attendance and behaviour of students educated off-site in the pupil referral units. The checks on the curriculum, on provision for the students and their welfare are rigorous. The checks on the sixth form, however, are less frequent and less effective.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the Interim executive Board are fully aware of the quality of teaching, students' achievement in each subject department and what is being done to reward good teaching and tackle underperformance. Middle leaders deliver presentations to the board about the latest updates in teaching and students' progress. Members of the board ask challenging questions, but also are knowledgeable and experienced enough to provide advice and guidance. Suitably qualified members of the board also have first-hand evidence through observing teaching and conducting work scrutiny.
 - Members have taken some difficult decisions regarding staffing and restructuring of the school. At each stage, they have pursued the impact of these changes to make sure they are beneficial to students. However, they have not been successful in checking on the impact of the pupil premium funding or the Year 7 catch-up funding. They have also not taken the action they should have to make sure the school's out-of-date website meets requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good and has improved significantly over the last year, due mainly to the ethos and culture generated by the acting headteacher. Students and staff acknowledge that a year ago derogatory language was rife. Now incidents of name-calling or teasing because of a student's race, religion, belief, disability or sexuality are rare. This is because there has been a successful effort to promote respect for diversity and for difference. Students sit harmoniously together in class and at break-times regardless of gender, age or ethnic heritage. Lunchtime indoors is a civilised experience with students calmly and quietly socialising.
- The number of call-outs because of poor behaviour has declined significantly, indicating students' behaviour in class has improved. From hundreds of call-outs each term and large numbers of students taken off timetable because of poor behaviour, incidents are now far fewer. The number of exclusions is falling quickly. Most students concentrate for most of the time in lessons. Where the teaching is captivating and interesting, students are keen to learn and this has a positive impact on the progress they make.
- Students take more pride in their school. Littering has reduced significantly, there is little graffiti and most students take pride in their appearance.
- The alternative provision at the pupil referral units has had a positive impact on tackling behaviour and attendance issues.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Students feel safe and the school site is secure and well-maintained. One of the reasons why safety requires improvement is because students' attendance is still too low. There has been significant improvement in this last term through a mix of rewards and a higher profile given to attendance, but students' absence is higher than the national average, particularly for disadvantaged students. Punctuality to lessons has improved, but there are still over 20 students late for school each day.
- Pupil services have an effective joined-up approach to protect students. The work the department does in supporting students to help tackle mental health issues is exemplary.
- The curriculum is being enhanced to provide more opportunities for students to learn about how to keep themselves safe. Nevertheless, the students who spoke to inspectors had only a basic knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves personally safe from more extreme behaviour, such as becoming involved in gangs, carrying weapons, getting involved with extremist ideology and keeping themselves safe when using social media. These are all areas that are being introduced into the

curriculum, but they have not had time to filter down to increase students' knowledge. Staff have received intensive training over the year in spotting extremism and checking that students are not being forced into marriage or into personal surgery.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is improving rapidly. Students that spoke to inspectors indicated that teaching in mathematics and languages in particular has improved. In these subjects they are learning more, making better progress and there is less disruption in lessons than a year ago. Teaching is particularly effective in science and in English, where students make quick gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- One of the reasons why teaching is not yet good is because teaching does not enable the most able to reach the higher levels. This in part is because there are not enough chances for students to explain their reasoning, convince others about their answers or to prove their theories and explanations. In addition, lessons do not extend students' speaking skills well enough; as a result, they lack confidence when giving their answers orally and when justifying their reasoning.
- The greater focus on assessment in lessons is working. Teachers monitor their classes well, checking on students' answers and asking follow-up questions to develop deeper understanding. They make sure all students know what they need to do to reach higher levels or what to do to reach a high grade. However, sometimes the most able students have to work their way through easier questions before reaching the activities that they need to improve their work. In some classes, there is an over-focus on how to answer examination questions, rather than learning more about the breadth of the topic.
- Teaching is more effective in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9. Older students have received intensive small-group and individual lessons to plug the gaps left by previous inadequate teaching. In addition to being variable across the ages, there is also some variation in the quality of teaching between subjects. In design and technology for example, the design element of the subject is underdeveloped and in citizenship the students have only a basic understanding of democratic structures in Britain and around the world.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students start school with attainment that is below average and they make expected progress from their starting points. Their achievement is rising rapidly. A much higher proportion of students in Years 10 and 11 are making expected progress in English and mathematics and are on course to attain five good GCSE qualifications. In Years 7 to 9, most students make expected progress in English, but too many students fail to make expected progress in mathematics. This is, in part, because of the poor teaching in the past.
- Students who enter Year 7 having attained the higher levels at primary school do not all make enough progress to achieve A* and A grades at GCSE. However, in the last year there are indications that attainment for the most able is also rising. In mathematics, for example, over three times as many students are on course for the highest grades this year. Similarly in Years 10 and 11, far more students are operating at the highest levels in languages, science subjects and music. There is still some way to go to make sure that the proportion attaining A* and A grades at least matches the national average.
- In 2014, students who were identified as disadvantaged attained well below other students nationally: in English approximately half a grade below other students and over a grade below in mathematics. The gap between Our Lady and St John students and others nationally is closing but the in-school gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students is widening in some year groups and in some subjects. In 2014 the proportion of disadvantaged students who attained five good GCSEs was 11% less than non-disadvantaged students. There has been an over-focus on enabling the lower ability disadvantaged students to increase their attainment at the expense of the higher ability. The pupil premium grant has not been spent wisely enough to make sure all groups of disadvantaged students make better progress.
- The students who are looked after by the local authority benefit greatly from the individual support devised by the pupil services team. Their attendance is high, their progress from their starting points is good and other aspects of achievement, such as readiness for their future careers, attitudes to work and learning, are good. Students who attend off-site provision make good progress.
- Students who have been identified as needing support because they have special educational needs make good progress. Staff expectations are high and this group has been targeted to make as much progress as other students. A good feature is that many students are deemed no longer to have special educational needs after a year or two of extra support, indicating the teaching has been effective.

- The school enters students early for their science GCSE examinations, but this does not have a negative impact on students' achievements.

The sixth form provision requires improvement

- At the start of the year, there were 18 students in the sixth form. This has now reduced to six. Comparisons with national averages or a commentary about students' attainment would be inappropriate. The sixth form closes in a few weeks' time and all students will transfer to St Mary's College, where they are currently being educated. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The sixth form offers a limited range of courses designed to support the needs and interests of the six students. It offers entry level qualifications in English, mathematics, hospitality and catering, plus courses in media. Students make appropriate progress in their academic skills in English and mathematics from very low starting points. Their work in books is not of good quality. They make better progress in their life skills such as confidence, the ability to work with others and communication skills. The students did not have as many opportunities to have a voice as students in the main school and had fewer chances for community involvement.
- Students feel safe, have good rates of attendance and behave well. They appreciate the effective care and support they have been given by staff. There are some striking examples where previously bullied and vulnerable students have had their lives turned round because of the care provided by the school. They show respect to their teachers and to each other.
- The leadership of the sixth form has enabled students to benefit from the well-designed transition from the school to the college. Most of the previous students have transferred to other courses or providers, three, for example, are now taking up apprenticeships. The self-evaluation and improvement planning for the sixth form is limited. Monitoring of the sixth form is not as frequent or as effective as it is in the main school.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	119790
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	456480

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	776
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Zammit
Acting headteacher	Patrick Murden
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2014
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