

# Our Lady and St John Catholic College

North Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 1PY

## Inspection dates

23–24 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- In 2016, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils was much lower than that of other pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils in the current Year 11 are making better progress. However, this is not the case in some subjects in other year groups.
- Leaders have not eradicated all weak teaching. Teaching is improving rapidly, but does not consistently enable all pupils to make good progress.
- A minority of pupils do not behave well in lessons and this hinders their learning.
- The school's rates of exclusion are higher than those found nationally and have risen further this year.
- The percentage of pupils who are frequently absent from school has reduced this year but remains significantly higher than the national average.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not fully effective.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides very strong and inspirational leadership. Since the previous inspection, he has made significant improvements to the school.
- The school has appointed a number of effective subject specialist teachers who are making a difference to the quality of teaching. Teaching in English is strong.
- The school works well in partnership with a local national teaching school. As a result, leaders and teachers are able to share good practice in both schools and to develop their expertise.
- Leaders have maintained a harmonious community where pupils get along well together. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well.
- The school's pastoral care of its pupils is good. Pupils are safe and are well looked after. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective.
- Governance is strong. Governors support and challenge the school effectively and hold leaders firmly to account.

## Full report

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

- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
  - taking further steps to improve teaching where it does not meet the school's expected standards
  - building on existing work with disadvantaged pupils to ensure that differences in achievement between this group and other pupils nationally diminish further.
- Improve the effectiveness of the leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - taking steps to reduce the low-level disruption caused by a minority of pupils in lessons
  - further reducing persistent absence
  - taking measures to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher's leadership is strong and inspirational. Since the previous inspection, he has continued to make improvements to the school. The headteacher from the local national teaching school told inspectors that the headteacher and his team have significantly improved the school's culture since the last inspection. Many pupils reiterated this view.
- Under the headteacher's tenure, parental confidence in the school and its provision has steadily increased. As a result, the school has increased its pupil numbers significantly. Most parents and staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire are very supportive of the headteacher.
- Leaders and governors recognise that the school is on a journey of improvement. They have already achieved much, but they acknowledge that there is still much to do. There is no complacency. The headteacher leads a concerted drive for continuous improvement. Inspectors' interviews with senior leaders and their scrutiny of other inspection evidence confirmed that the school has the capacity to go on improving.
- Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the work of the school robustly. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because they visit lessons regularly and frequently examine the quality of work in pupils' books. Senior leaders regularly meet with subject leaders to hold them to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their subjects.
- Leaders and teachers work hard to raise pupils' achievement. Internal tracking information shows that Year 11 pupils are making stronger progress this year in a number of subjects, including in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher has made it clear that there is a whole-school imperative to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The pupil premium funding this year has been used more effectively than in previous years. The differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers are diminishing in Year 11. However, disadvantaged pupils performed poorly in English, mathematics and humanities in 2016.
- The school's report on how it used its Year 7 catch-up funding, which is designed to support those pupils who arrive with low levels of literacy and numeracy, lacks detail of impact. Inspection evidence indicates that leaders use the funding effectively to improve pupils' literacy skills. It is not used as effectively to develop pupils' numeracy skills.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. Senior leaders have developed an effective, wide-ranging approach to monitoring teaching, with the result that they have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and its typicality. Teachers are appreciative of the professional development opportunities they have. Leaders have recently appointed a number of lead practitioners in several subjects. These talented teachers have helped to raise the quality of teaching across the curriculum. As a result of effective leadership, teaching continues to improve. However, it is not yet consistently effective and some weak teaching remains.

- Leaders have high expectations of staff. They use appraisal effectively to improve staff performance and they and governors do not approve pay rises where performance does not merit this. Teachers are supported and challenged to improve when their work does not meet required standards and the headteacher and governors take firm action if colleagues fail to improve sufficiently. As a result, a number of teachers have left the school in recent years. Leaders know where teaching still needs to improve and have plans in place to address this.
- The quality of middle leadership varies. Recent appointments to some subjects, for example English, are already starting to improve provision and standards in these areas are rising. Leaders have taken strong action recently to address weaknesses they identified in certain departments, for example in humanities and modern foreign languages, with the result that teaching in these subjects is now improving. In languages, for example, two specialist leaders in education are leading the development of teaching strongly.
- The overall leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not fully effective. The training of teaching assistants is not strategically planned and there is insufficient checking of the quality of their work. Some parents feel that they do not get enough information about the progress that their children make. However, despite these concerns, the special educational needs funding is used effectively to enable pupils make the progress that is expected of them.
- The school's curriculum at key stage 4 is broad and balanced. Leaders recognise that the proportion of pupils who are successful in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) has been very low compared with the national picture. They have sought to give the curriculum a more academic emphasis in recent times, to reflect national developments more accurately. As a result, the percentage of pupils taking the EBacc suite of qualifications will rise substantially over the next few years. Leaders have maintained a few vocational options, such as health and social care and business studies, in which pupils usually perform well.
- There is a renewed focus on the curriculum in key stage 3. Leaders seek to ensure that programmes of study build effectively on work done in primary school, while ensuring that there is sufficient challenge to prepare pupils for the demands of new GCSE examinations.
- The school offers its pupils a range of extra-curricular activities, including the opportunity to participate in charity work, a range of musical activities, sports clubs and educational visits. Pupils welcome and enjoy these activities, which enrich learning.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is strong and effective.
- The governing body was set up in September 2016, following the dissolution of the previous interim executive board. Governors have recruited a team of people with a wide range of appropriate skills, who bring considerable expertise and experience to the governing body. For example, the headteacher of the national teaching school, with which Our Lady and St John works in partnership, is an active member of the governing body.

- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They hold leaders and managers firmly to account and ask challenging questions about pupils' progress. They regularly review pupils' performance data, so they have a sound awareness of how well pupils are performing and where the priorities for development lie.
- Governors support the school effectively. For example, they serve as link governors to departments. One governor told the inspector how she visits her link department, walks through lessons and looks at pupils' work. This gives her a good insight into the work of the department.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the school's finances. They have effectively supported the headteacher to reduce a very significant budget deficit, with the result that the school finances are now back on an even keel. Governors check that additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is used appropriately.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements.
- The school's safeguarding policies and practices are thorough and robust. Leaders actively promote a culture of vigilance where pupils' safety and welfare are paramount. Safeguarding and child protection are high priorities.
- The school has rigorous checking procedures in place for child protection. All staff, including non-teaching staff, have been trained in safeguarding and child protection and they know what to do if a child is at risk. Pupils have regular assemblies on aspects of safeguarding and are encouraged to talk to staff. Any concerns reported are followed up meticulously by staff. Record-keeping is thorough. The school works effectively with parents and external agencies to keep pupils secure and safe from harm.
- Staff have had training on 'Prevent', the government's programme for preventing radicalisation and extremism, and staff training on safeguarding is kept up to date.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example online. The school has filters in place to prevent inappropriate internet usage.
- Governors are suitably trained in safeguarding and in the safe recruitment of new staff.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Despite recent improvements, teaching is still variable overall. School leaders have invested heavily in improving teaching, and the appointment of lead practitioners and specialist leaders in education is a positive initiative which is already having a real impact in several subjects. However, leaders have not yet fully eradicated some of the weaker teaching. In a small number of lessons, levels of challenge for pupils are not high enough and teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve are too low.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work, both in lessons and in the separate sample provided by leaders, revealed mixed results. Most pupils are being challenged and are producing good-quality work over time. However, a minority of pupils do work which is

not good enough, including some of the most able pupils. Inspectors saw several examples of books where little effort or care had been taken or where pupils left work unfinished. Teachers do not consistently address these faults.

- Most teachers managed behaviour well and most pupils had positive attitudes to learning and were ready and willing to learn. However, in a few lessons, pupils' lack of engagement with the lesson resulted in low-level disruption and consequent poor learning. In some lessons, teachers did not address poor behaviour robustly enough.
- A number of pupils told inspectors that teaching generally has improved of late. Inspectors visited several lessons where teachers successfully challenged pupils at appropriate levels. English teaching, for example, is a strength of the school. In English, inspectors saw lots of examples in pupils' books of refined, extended writing, showing good levels of understanding of literary texts.
- Inspectors saw other examples of strong teaching which was promoting pupils' good progress effectively, for example in science, art, mathematics and media studies. Inspectors noted positive improvements in the quality of teaching in humanities, which had previously been a subject causing concern.
- There are clear strengths in the teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspectors observed two small groups of Year 8 pupils making progress on improving their reading skills through effective teaching of phonics. In a low-ability Year 7 group, good support from the teacher and teaching assistants gave the pupils the confidence to improve their writing.
- The school encourages pupils to read widely, for example through the study of interesting class readers, such as 'The boy in the striped pyjamas'. Year 7 and Year 8 pupils told the inspector that they enjoy reading these books and that they are encouraged to take books out of the school library.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have created a harmonious and caring ethos in which most pupils thrive. Pupils feel safe in school, and they know how to stay safe. They know how to protect themselves from radicalisation and from exploitation and receive information about these aspects in each year group.
- Relationships between pupils are generally strong. One pupil commented to the inspector that, 'We are like a family here.' A very small number of pupils and parents complained that there is some bullying and that the school does not address this effectively. However, the great majority of pupils who met inspectors or responded to the online questionnaire said that there is little bullying and that staff usually deal with it promptly when it arises. Pupils said that there is no racism or homophobic bullying.
- Pupils wear their uniform smartly and the great majority are courteous and respectful. Most have positive attitudes to learning and take pride in their work. The majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire said that their children are well

cared for.

- Work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is underpinned by the school's strong Catholic ethos. In their personal, social, health and economic education lessons pupils learn about aspects such as healthy eating and money management. They learn about fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in cultural visits, for example, to art galleries and theatres.
- Pupils receive objective advice, information and guidance regarding their future careers. There is a comprehensive programme of activities, which runs in every year group, including visits from university staff and employers. Year 10 pupils have the opportunity to participate in work experience. In the last three years, no pupils have failed to gain a place in education, employment or training on leaving the school, which demonstrates the successful impact of the careers programme.
- A very small number of pupils now attend alternative provision so that their specific needs can be better met. The school monitors their behaviour and attendance carefully. Pupils are making the progress expected of them.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Leaders and governors say that they have needed to take a firm line against poor behaviour in the past in order to give pupils strong messages about unacceptable conduct. As a result, the school recorded very high numbers of behavioural incidents last year. Most pupils who spoke to inspectors said that behaviour has improved in lessons and around the school and governors feel that behaviour is well managed. However, although the number of recorded incidents has reduced substantially this year, the figure remains very high.
- In 2015, the percentage of pupils receiving a fixed-term exclusion was significantly higher than the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The number of fixed-term exclusions has increased further this year.
- The behaviour of pupils as they went around the school site at break and lunchtimes was generally good during the inspection. The school was calm and orderly and staff generally managed behaviour successfully. However, a small minority of pupils dawdled between lessons and therefore arrived late. Fifteen Year 10 pupils arrived late at assembly.
- In 2015 and 2016, attendance was below national averages. The school has worked very hard to improve attendance and has put in place a range of appropriate strategies. As a result, overall attendance has risen closer to the national average. The proportion of pupils who were persistently absent has been well above national averages, especially for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has reduced the number of pupils who are regularly absent this year, but the figure still remains significantly higher than the national average.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- In 2015 and again in 2016, the overall Progress 8 score, the new national measure by which secondary school performance is assessed, was slightly higher than national averages. In general, this represented positive progress overall for the two cohorts, which both had low starting points. However, in 2016, the large disadvantaged cohort performed poorly, while in 2015 the progress made by disadvantaged pupils from some starting points was low in both English and mathematics. In 2016, the overall progress made by disadvantaged pupils was significantly below that of other pupils nationally, as was progress in English and mathematics.
- Overall performance in humanities was in the bottom 10% of schools nationally in 2016, as was the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in this subject area. Attainment was generally low in 2016. Many subjects fell well below national averages at grades A\* to C in GCSE and also at the highest grades. The percentage of disadvantaged pupils attaining grades A\* to C in both English and mathematics was well below that of other pupils in school and nationally.
- The school has done significant work with the national teaching school to validate its assessments in the light of changes to GCSE requirements. The internal tracking information shows that current Year 11 pupils are on track to achieve significantly better outcomes in 2017, including in English and mathematics. Many subjects look set to improve their GCSE grades.
- Leaders have made raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils a whole-school priority and strategies devised are starting to have an impact. The school's assessment information indicates that the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally will diminish significantly this year in English and mathematics, though wide gaps are likely to remain in core science, humanities, religious education and Spanish.
- Like most other schools currently, the school is in the process of embedding a new assessment system. Targets for Years 7 to 10 have changed recently. The new system appears to show high percentages of pupils in most year groups and most subjects performing above target currently. Unfortunately, inspectors were not able to verify that this information is accurate. Evidence gathered during the inspection, including from a scrutiny of pupils' work, did not paint a strong enough picture of consistent, sustained improvement.
- Leaders correctly identified the need to raise the achievement of the most able pupils and have asked staff to focus on this group specifically and to ensure that levels of challenge are high. Inspectors saw good levels of challenge for most-able pupils in several lessons and in some pupils' work, but this was not consistent across subjects. The school estimates that the percentages of pupils reaching the highest GCSE grades will rise in 2017. However, the most able disadvantaged cohort are performing less well than their peers in English language and literature, mathematics and history at the highest grades.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make the progress that is expected of them and receive good support from staff.
- The school is doing effective work to improve pupils' literacy, but has given less priority to the development of numeracy skills.

## School details

Unique reference number	119790
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10032192

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	727
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Zamitt
Headteacher	Patrick Murden
Telephone number	012545 88388
Website	<a href="http://www.olsj.blackburn.sch.uk">www.olsj.blackburn.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:pmurden@olsj.blackburn.sch.uk">pmurden@olsj.blackburn.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	16–17 June 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Since the previous inspection, the sixth form has closed.
- Following the dissolution of the previous interim executive board, the new governing body was formed from September 2016.
- The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be disadvantaged is higher than the national average.
- The overall proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress across a number of subjects, including English and mathematics, by the end of Year 11.
- From September 2017, the school will enter into a formal federation with the local national teaching school and the headteacher of Our Lady and St John will take up the role of executive headteacher for the two schools. A new head of school has been appointed to lead Our Lady and St John, though the current headteacher will continue to have overall responsibility for the school.
- A very small number of pupils access alternative education provision at St Thomas's Centre and at The Heights and Eden free school in Blackburn.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons. They visited form time and an assembly and observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated pupils' work in lessons and scrutinised a sample of work provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders, class teachers and governors. The lead inspector also spoke with the director of children's services for Blackburn with Darwen local authority.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils formally and spoke with many more pupils informally. Inspectors listened to pupils reading. They took account of the 15 responses to the online pupil survey.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of documents. These included: the school's internal data which tracks pupils' achievement; development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; minutes of governing body meetings; school policies; and safeguarding procedures and records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's website to ensure that it met requirements.
- The team took account of the 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and of the six free-text responses received from parents. Inspectors also took account of the 69 responses to the staff online questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Clive Hurren, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Farrent	Ofsted Inspector
Shane Ierston	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector

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