

Our Lady and St Chad Catholic Academy

Old Fallings Lane, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV10 8BL

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2018

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is led well by an effective headteacher. She has established a well-understood vision for the school. The school expects pupils and staff to show a genuine interest in learning and to work hard to overcome any difficulties.
- Senior leaders in the school are ambitious for the pupils in their care. They have worked hard to improve teaching and to provide a good range of curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. A programme of building is under way to meet the growing demand for places at the school.
- Teaching in the school is usually very effective. Careful monitoring of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress gives senior leaders detailed understanding of strengths and weaknesses across the school. In nearly all instances, weaker teaching has been eradicated.
- A significant number of new staff have been appointed to the school recently. A regular programme of training supports new and more established staff well.
- Middle leaders meet regularly to review how well pupils are doing. They are committed to improving the quality of pupils' experience while at the school. However, they do not yet ensure that all approaches to teaching and learning agreed by the school are implemented consistently in classrooms.
- Pupils make good progress during their time at school. Since the previous inspection, staffing difficulties have resulted in some uneven GCSE results. However, pupils are now taught well and achieve outcomes in line with their starting points, including in mathematics and English. Disadvantaged pupils do well. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are taught well and make good progress.
- Pupils are cared for and supported very well. The school places considerable emphasis on keeping pupils safe. Individual pupils are well known to staff. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour is good.
- The sixth form provides a good education. Sixth-form students are positive about their experiences. They have access to a relevant range of courses. They are well taught and achieve good results, particularly in applied and vocational courses. Some A-level students do only a limited amount of work at home and this limits opportunities to explore and develop ideas in lessons.
- The governing body discharges its responsibilities well. It makes effective use of detailed management information to hold the school to account for pupils' performance. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning further by:
 - giving middle leaders greater responsibility for checking that all classroom practice is consistent with the approaches agreed by the school.
 - continuing to tackle the small amount of remaining weaker teaching.
- Increase the amount of work that sixth formers studying for A-level qualifications do outside school so that more time in lessons can be spent on exploring and developing new ideas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school is very well led by a headteacher who is ambitious for her pupils. A hardworking and experienced senior leadership team supports her very well. Her vision for the school as a demanding, inquisitive and resilient community is well understood by all staff, parents and pupils.
- Pupils who attend the school come from different backgrounds and faiths. Senior leaders have established a positive ethos in the school that encourages pupils to achieve success within the context of Christian gospel values of respect, truth, justice, peace, charity and forgiveness. A strong team spirit permeates the life of the school, reflecting the school motto of 'strong alone, unstoppable together'.
- Leaders are very visible around the school. They are routinely seen in corridors, make regular visits to classrooms and exercise a high level of care and supervision for pupils.
- Systems for collecting information about the impact of teaching and the pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour are well organised. This information is analysed and used to revise policy, introduce new initiatives and manage the performance of staff. However, only a few senior leaders do the monitoring of teaching. This is not leading to enough consistency in practice.
- The school has experienced some recent staffing difficulties, particularly in mathematics, which have been tackled successfully. The school has appointed new middle leaders in key subjects and recruited other specialist teachers.
- Training for all staff is well organised and linked to individual, subject and whole-school priorities. It is regular and valued by teaching and support staff. Good use is made of links with other schools in the multi-academy trust, and the support that is commissioned from the local authority, to improve the quality of teaching.
- Middle leaders are very well supported by senior leaders. However, they are not consistently expected to take enough direct responsibility for checking that agreed policy is translated into practice in all classrooms.
- The social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils is good. A notable feature of the school is its strong Catholic ethos, which is reflected in positive and respectful relationships, regular prayers and assemblies.
- The curriculum is relevant to the pupils' needs. Pupils study a broad range of subjects at key stage 3 before opting to follow courses that reflect their interests as they grow older. All pupils study a wide range of subjects to GCSE level, including English, mathematics and science. An extensive extra-curricular programme gives pupils good opportunities to experience cultural, artistic and sporting activities. A few pupils attend short-term alternative placements for a small number of hours each week. These pupils are supported well and their progress at the placements is monitored carefully.
- An ambitious programme of careers education has led to increased aspirations for pupils. Many pupils set their sights very high and work hard towards challenging career aims.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are usually supported well. Strong oversight and care help ensure that these pupils make good progress overall.
- Resources are managed and used carefully. Leaders have worked hard to create an attractive and welcoming teaching and learning environment. Pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding are used well to support targeted pupils.
- Senior leaders have made reasonable progress in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. An imaginative strategy of 'nowhere to hide' has helped most pupils to contribute more in lessons, and the work set for pupils is usually sufficiently challenging.
- Senior leaders are meeting the challenge of expanding the school well. They understand that the way the school is organised now will not be effective as numbers grow. For example, they are planning to realign responsibilities so that oversight of the sixth form strengthens. In addition, they recognise the need to improve the leadership of teaching by giving middle leaders more responsibility for ensuring its quality. A programme of building work is under way.

Governance of the school

- The governing body provides a good level of support and challenge to the school.
- Governors have a broad range of expertise and experience, which they use to hold the school to account. They work well with the multi-academy trust's board of trustees.
- Local governors work well with senior leaders. Governors ask for detailed information from senior leaders, which they use to interrogate school performance. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They are aware of the logistical and administrative challenges faced by the school as it expands.
- Governors visit the school regularly and have productive links with key departments.
- They are aware of earlier staffing difficulties in mathematics and the actions taken to resolve them. An effective and comprehensive programme of training supports individual governors in discharging their responsibilities effectively, including for safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is very well led. Pupils feel safe in school and know whom to turn to if they have any difficulties. Bullying is rare and a strong ethos of care pervades the school. All pupils and staff follow the tenet of 'don't walk on by'. They are watchful of each other and if they notice a problem they take time to deal with it. Pupils are given helpful advice about how to keep themselves safe, including when using social media.
- Staff are trained in safeguarding and aware of what to do if they have any concerns. They have a good understanding of the different risks that pupils may face, locally as well as more widely. They understand the importance of safeguarding.
- Relevant records are kept in sufficient detail and are high quality. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Positive relationships between teaching staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Teachers support their pupils well and are determined to help them achieve their potential. Pupils respond to this by trying hard in lessons.
- Routines are very well established in most classrooms. Pupils listen quietly, move around the classroom thoughtfully, and work steadily and quietly when asked. They know what is expected of them and nearly always conform to expectations.
- Teachers make effective use of what they know about pupils to plan lessons. They use test results and regular scrutiny of work to assess how well pupils are doing. In most instances, the work set is challenging and reflects the pupils' prior attainment. Pupils usually know the level they are working at and what they need to do to improve further.
- Teachers check during lessons that pupils have learned what they need to. Where necessary, they revisit topics or ideas to give the pupils another opportunity to acquire the relevant knowledge, skills or understanding. The activities done in lessons are usually lively, interesting and motivate the pupils.
- Nearly all teachers have very good subject knowledge. They use this to engage and inspire pupils. Many also draw on an impressive array of strategies to involve pupils in lessons, which usually leads to rapid progress. For example, most teachers use questions very well to draw all pupils into the lesson.
- Assessment information is used very well across the school to check on the progress of different groups of pupils. Senior leaders review the progress of pupils in their different subjects at regular points in the year. This helps them to decide where intervention is needed or where pupils are not working hard enough.
- Teachers are well supported in making accurate assessments. Regular 'book looks', discussion and moderation help ensure that teachers' assessment of what pupils know, can do and understand are reliable.
- English, mathematics and science are taught well. New leadership in mathematics, and the appointment of further specialist teachers, have strengthened mathematics teaching. A programme of numeracy teaching, including sessions taught each morning during registration, helps develop mathematical fluency in pupils.
- Training for teachers is generally effective and is supplemented by a programme of coaching, lesson observation and 'magpie' walks. Senior leaders visit classrooms often. However, middle leaders do not assume enough responsibility for checking that practice is effective or that agreed approaches to teaching and learning are implemented consistently. In a few instances, pupils are more restless when they should be working quietly, not all teachers correct basic errors in spelling, punctuation and presentation in the way the school expects, and the work set in music and drama can be too easy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- A caring ethos, reflecting the Catholic faith, pervades the school. Leaders and other staff know individual pupils very well. Vulnerable pupils are supported very well by senior leaders and by peer mentors through initiatives like the 'Academy Reflection Centre' and the 'Active Mind Well-being Group'.
- Pupils are usually punctual to school and lessons. Their attendance levels have improved and are slightly above the national figures. Rates of absence for disadvantaged pupils, and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, have reduced. A range of imaginative strategies, including sport, has led to a marked decrease in the rate of persistent absence. Leaders and other staff know individual pupils very well. They provide strong support for all pupils, including those who are vulnerable.
- Effective links with primary schools ensure that the transition to secondary school is well managed. This helps pupils to settle in well at the start of Year 7. A significant number of pupils join the school in other years. Considerable support is given to these pupils so that they flourish at the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, friendly and respectful. Nearly all respond quickly to instructions and are eager to contribute in lessons.
- Pupils move around the school sensibly. Boisterous behaviour is very rare and dealt with quickly if it does occur. The pupils' conduct at breaktime and lunchtime is very orderly.
- Pupils enjoy school and most pupils wear their uniform with pride. They generally observe school rules and bring the right equipment to lessons. Homework planners are used well and most are kept very neatly.
- Pupils value the rewards system. Careful records of behaviour are kept by the school and these show that instances of low-level disruption are rare. Rates of exclusion have reduced and are low.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress during their time at school. Many pupils start school with below-average levels of prior attainment. Good teaching and high levels of care ensure that they leave school with good GCSE results given their starting points.
- English and mathematics results at GCSE dipped in 2016 but were better in 2017. Overall, the pupils' outcomes at GCSE in 2017 were broadly in line with national figures.

- Pupils who are at the school are making good progress. The proportions of pupils who are doing well in English, mathematics, science and humanities are high. Progress in music, drama and art is less strong.
- GCSE results for disadvantaged pupils are strong. A high proportion of pupils at the school are supported by the pupil premium. The progress of these pupils has improved markedly in the last three years. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress from their starting points.
- A notable feature of the school is the way it raises aspirations for pupils. A very good programme of information, advice and guidance encourages pupils to aspire to ambitious but realistic career choices. Pupils at the school are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They leave school as tolerant, confident, articulate and ambitious pupils who are very well prepared for the next stage in their education or training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Sixth-form students are taught effectively and make good progress. They achieve good outcomes on A-level courses and exceptionally good outcomes on vocational courses. Vocational programmes are very well organised. Students who resit GCSE English and mathematics achieve success in line with national figures.
- Sixth-form students attend regularly and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Overall, they benefit from well-planned lessons, taught by specialist teachers, and an effective programme of care and support, which supports them if they encounter any difficulties. A thoughtful programme of independent advice and guidance ensures that they study for appropriate qualifications.
- Sixth-form students are encouraged to aim high and are very well supported when applying for university. Most are offered places at their first-choice university, including at Russell Group universities.
- Programmes of study are relevant to sixth-form students' interests and aptitudes. They include opportunities to study for a balanced range of qualifications. Sixth-form students have ample opportunities to develop outside the classroom, including through volunteering, visits abroad, and cultural and sporting activities.
- The sixth form is led well. Senior leaders make regular checks on how well sixth-form students are doing. Arrangements for the leadership of the sixth form are being reviewed as it expands. In a few instances, sixth formers studying A levels are not expected to complete enough preparation work at home. This means that time in lessons is wasted going over ground they could cover at home. Consequently, opportunities to discuss and develop new ideas are limited.

School details

Unique reference number	141802
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10042880

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	830
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	145
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Acting Chair	Mr A Morgan
Principal	Miss T Ellis
Telephone number	01902 558 250
Website	www.olsc.org.uk
Email address	info@olscmail.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background is above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is higher than in most schools. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than average.

- The school is growing in size and popularity. Additional classrooms and facilities are being built, with the support of the local authority, to accommodate growth in the number of pupils on roll.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons to observe teaching and learning.
- They spoke with pupils from across the school and viewed their conduct in and out of lessons. Inspectors scrutinised the amount of work being done by pupils in each subject, and its difficulty, and looked at records kept by teachers of pupils' progress.
- They met with senior and middle leaders, teachers, other key staff and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors met with a group of governors.
- Inspector studied a range of documents and other information provided by the school, including key documents relating to the pupils' progress and to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of 70 responses to the staff questionnaire. They took account of 48 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 12 written comments.

Inspection team

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