

Archbishop Ilsley Catholic School

Victoria Road, Acocks Green, Birmingham, West Midlands B27 7XY

Inspection dates

6–7 June 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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- All groups of pupils in the main school make good progress in the different subjects and year groups.
- Teaching is good in most subjects. Teachers have good subject knowledge that results in learning which is well matched to the needs of pupils.
- Pupils enjoy particularly strong teaching in English. The quality of teaching in this subject is consistently of a very high standard.
- Provision for pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils feel exceptionally well cared for and they have full confidence that staff will help them if they have personal or emotional needs.
- Teachers ensure that most pupils have very good attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils work hard and try their best.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils behave respectfully towards each other and their teachers. Most are well mannered and polite.
- Pupils work and socialise well with each other, regardless of their different backgrounds. The school is a harmonious multi-cultural community.
- Leadership is good at all levels. Leaders have created a school ethos, which is underpinned by mutual respect and British values.
- The curriculum is very well planned so that it meets the needs of pupils. Work to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is very effective.
- The skilful governing body knows the school well. It holds school leaders to account appropriately for their plans and actions.
- Although disadvantaged pupils are catching up well with others, leaders' plans to improve outcomes for this group of pupils are not as sharp as they could be.
- The quality of teaching and learning in science is not consistently good.
- Although improving, the sixth form requires improvement because learners do not make good progress, particularly in academic courses.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in science so that it is at least consistently good, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information to plan work which is accurately matched to the skills and abilities of pupils
 - pupils have more opportunities to communicate their understanding of science in writing using their own words.
- Ensure that all leaders' actions to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are sharply checked in order that underperformance is quickly identified and addressed.
- Improve outcomes in the sixth form, particularly in academic courses, by:
 - setting appropriately challenging targets for students
 - appropriate monitoring of the progress of different groups of students so that, when necessary, precise improvements can be made to teaching
 - systematically sharing good practice in sixth-form teaching and monitoring the impact of this on students' progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership at all levels is good. Leaders have created a culture where both staff and pupils are determined to succeed.
- Leaders have made sure that pupils benefit from consistently good teaching in most subjects and achieve well. This is because they have effective systems for checking teaching and learning at appropriately regular points throughout the year. Leaders take account of all the information available so that they can make accurate judgements about strengths and areas of relative weakness. As a result, most weaknesses are quickly addressed. All the leaders who joined inspectors to observe lessons made accurate and perceptive assessments about the strengths and areas for development.
- Pupils' progress is checked regularly. Senior leaders have appropriate systems for holding the different subject departments to account for pupils' progress. For example, after each check, senior leaders meet with subject leaders and provide a good balance of support and challenge so that any pupils who are falling behind are helped to catch up. However, the impact of all strategies to support disadvantaged pupils are occasionally not addressed as well as they could be.
- Subject leaders have been well trained to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning in their respective areas. This is why teaching is consistently good and why pupils make good progress.
- Leaders prioritise staff training. Teachers appreciate this support and they value opportunities to continually improve their skills. Those staff who aspire to middle or senior leadership are supported by the school through a well-planned programme of training and development.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is good. As a result, pupils who require additional support make good progress from their individual starting points.
- An important reason why provision for pupils' pastoral needs is outstanding is because leaders have created a team of staff who work in a well-coordinated way to support pupils, including those who do not attend school regularly enough. Consequently, pupils feel exceptionally well supported.
- The leadership of careers education is a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy a wide range of careers advice and support through, for example, curriculum enrichment days and visiting employers. Leaders have made sure that the school is meeting almost all of the government's requirements for careers education well in advance of the national deadline.
- The exciting curriculum is broad and balanced. It is very well planned to meet the learning and personal development needs of pupils. The Years 7 and 8 curriculum is called 'Enquire and Create'. One teacher teaches pupils in these year groups for many lessons and topics are designed so that pupils can develop important English and mathematical skills as well as make connections between different subjects. This approach ensures that the transition from primary school is well managed by leaders.

Older pupils in key stage 4 select a range of examination courses, which are well matched to pupils' interests, abilities and career aspirations.

- The curriculum helps pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness very well. These areas are threaded through the different subjects as well as taught in assemblies. British values underpin the ethos of the school and pupils learn about these through activities such as the pupil parliament.
- Pupils enjoy a wide and diverse range of extra-curricular activities. Many enjoy taking part in the numerous sporting activities and musical productions. These activities, as well as others, make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Leaders are successfully narrowing the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of others. Leaders work with a representative from the local authority using a strategy called 'raising achievement of disadvantaged youngsters' (RADY). Although leaders monitor and evaluate this strategy, they do not check the effect of other actions to accelerate further the progress of disadvantaged pupils with the same level of rigour. This is because the limited use of targets and milestones in their plans means that leaders, including governors, cannot objectively evaluate the impact of all strategies on pupils' progress at points throughout the year.
- Almost all parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school is good and that it is well led and managed.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Teaching in science is not good enough and leaders are working to improve it. Also, although the sixth form is improving, leaders know that students in the sixth form do not make good progress, particularly in academic courses, and know that more needs to be done to further improve the sixth form.
- Year 11 outcomes have not been good enough in recent years. Leaders have identified the main reasons for this, which include, in part, teachers entering some pupils for the wrong level of examination in mathematics. This meant that some pupils were not able to achieve the grades of which they were capable, and this had a negative impact on published data. However, this year, leaders are confident that pupils have been entered for the appropriate level of examination.

Governance

- Members of the governing body have a wide range of complementary skills. They have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the governing body holds school leaders to account effectively for their plans and actions.
- The governing body monitors the impact on outcomes of additional funding. For example, governors know that the school is achieving good value for money for the additional pupil premium funding because differences in attainment between these pupils and others are narrowing. They also know that additional Year 7 catch-up funding, which is given to schools to support those pupils who did not reach the expected standard in English or mathematics at the end of Year 6, is used effectively to support the 'Enquire and Create' curriculum.

- Governors have a programme of school visits. This is a good strategy and further adds to the governing body's ability to support and challenge leaders in the areas that will make the most difference to pupils.
- The governing body has appropriate procedures for setting and reviewing performance targets for the headteacher. It also has appropriate systems for making decisions about whether teachers should receive pay rises in relation to them achieving their targets.
- To improve outcomes in sixth-form academic courses, governors are holding relevant leaders to account better this year.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are well trained and kept fully up to date in all matters relating to safeguarding. They know what to look for if a child may be at risk and they know the procedures to be followed if they have any concerns. As a result, there is a culture of safeguarding throughout the school.
- Leaders place a high level of importance on all matters relating to child protection and safeguarding. As a result, several members of staff are trained to lead on safeguarding matters. Leaders keep a close eye on any safeguarding concerns and they monitor any patterns or trends which may be relevant to individual pupils. They use the expertise of external agencies well and this ensures that any pupil who requires specific support receives it in a timely manner.
- The case studies which leaders provided for inspectors clearly show that leaders are appropriately tenacious in their follow-up of any safeguarding concerns.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at school, including students in the sixth form. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of safeguarding matters and are able to appropriately assess risks, when necessary.
- The school meets all statutory requirements for staff recruitment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils benefit from teaching which is consistently good. As a result, pupils make strong progress in most subjects.
- The quality of teaching in English is a strength. Teaching in this subject is consistently good and often outstanding. Pupils enjoy English lessons because teachers make work interesting and all staff have the highest expectations of pupils. Pupils are keen to meet teachers' high expectations and, as a result, most make at least good progress.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in almost all subjects. This means that stimulating work set at their own level of ability appropriately challenges pupils.
- Most teachers consistently apply the school's marking and assessment policy. In the best examples, this has a strong impact on helping pupils to improve their work. For example, in many mathematics books, teachers provide pupils with helpful feedback,

which results in pupils successfully addressing errors and misconceptions. In English, pupils are required to redraft work, sometimes several times, so that they apply the very good advice given by teachers.

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. As well as benefiting all pupils, these high expectations have a very good impact on the learning and progress of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. The most able pupils are given work that stretches and challenges their thinking. As a result, these pupils develop a deep understanding of complex concepts.
- Teachers know their pupils well. This is evident from the plans that teachers use that highlight specific strengths and weaknesses that pupils have. Teachers use these plans to make sure that individuals are given the right support to catch up in lessons.
- Disadvantaged pupils are taught well. This is because teachers use a range of strategies that are specifically targeted at these pupils and which are part of the RADY work. Focused questioning for specific pupils is part of this and it is having a positive impact on learning.
- Leaders provide teachers with appropriately detailed advice, which relates to the specific learning needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. When appropriate, teachers use this information to plan work for individual pupils, which is bespoke to their particular needs.
- Teachers have very good relationships with pupils. This contributes to the positive learning climate in most classrooms.
- The quality of teaching in science requires improvement. Although there is some good teaching, there is too much variability. Sometimes work is not matched to the different abilities of pupils. This means that work is too hard or too easy. Pupils' books indicate that too much time is spent copying, which does not require pupils to think in any depth. These factors are resulting in slower progress for pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to develop pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Some staff who met with an inspector described the school as a 'nurturing school'. Others said that the school is characterised by 'compassion and passion'. The staff were referring to the high priority that the school gives to pupils' personal development and emotional well-being.
- Pupils' personal, social and emotional needs are met exceptionally well by the school. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, are confident that there is always an adult whom they can talk to if they need support. The school ensures that pupils can receive support from a counsellor, when necessary. It also provides the expertise of a social worker.
- The prevailing culture of mutual respect is preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils work and socialise well together, valuing and respecting each other's different backgrounds and beliefs.

- Pupils dress smartly and behave respectfully towards staff. Pupils value learning and have very good attitudes to their studies. The vast majority of pupils work hard and try their best. Many are developing good levels of resilience and a determination to keep trying until success is achieved.
- The school site is almost litter free. This is indicative of the pupils' sense of 'social responsibility', which the school is successfully developing in pupils.
- Bullying is rare at the school. As a result, pupils feel safe. All groups of pupils that inspectors met said that when bullying does occur, staff are quick to respond and resolve matters.
- The school takes pupils' safety and welfare very seriously. As a result, pupils understand how to keep safe in a range of different contexts, including when working online. The school works closely with the police to help pupils keep safe. Pupils spoke about assemblies taken by a police officer, which focused on knife crime.
- The excellent careers education programme makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development in the main school and the sixth form. Pupils and students have a good understanding about careers and the various options that may be open to them in the future. Careers education also contributes to the strong attitudes to learning that most pupils display. Partly as a result of the careers education programme, almost every Year 11 pupil that left the school last year moved on to further education or employment with training. Every Year 13 student who left last year moved on to higher education, apprenticeships or employment.
- Pupils enjoy many opportunities to take responsibility. For example, the pupil parliament gives pupils a voice in the school as well as helping them to understand the concepts of democracy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils behave respectfully towards their peers and their teachers. This is because teachers consistently model good behaviour and have high expectations, which are regularly communicated to pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and at social times. There are high levels of staff supervision at breaktimes and this supports good behaviour as well as ensuring that pupils are safe.
- Pupils who met with inspectors said that behaviour is good. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, also said that behaviour is good. Staff who met an inspector also agreed that behaviour is good.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is consistently good and sixth-form students are very good role models for younger pupils.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. For the past three years, attendance has been average. Rates of persistent absence have also been broadly average. The attendance of sixth-form students is similar to that of younger pupils.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and some who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than that of other pupils. This has been the position for the past few years.

However, the attendance of these groups of pupils is showing some improvement this year, as fewer pupils are persistently absent. This is due to the work of the attendance team, which is tenacious and rigorous in its approach to improving the attendance of individual pupils.

- There have been no permanent exclusions in recent years and fixed-term exclusions have been consistently below average for several years.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils currently at the school in key stages 3 and 4 are making consistently good progress across subjects and year groups.
- The learning needs of lower attaining pupils are met well by teachers. These pupils make good progress and others of similar ability have consistently made good progress over time.
- Disadvantaged pupils are catching up with their peers well. However, although disadvantaged pupils are making good progress, the attainment of some of these pupils lags behind that of others in some subjects.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make consistently good progress. This is because teachers adapt work so that it meets the specific needs of pupils, when necessary. Some of these pupils also receive good support through intervention activities, which help them to catch up quickly.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make strong progress across the curriculum. Outcomes by the end of Year 11 for this group of pupils have been good in recent years.
- Pupils who are supported by the additional Year 7 catch-up funding are catching up with others. The 'Enquire and Create' curriculum enables these pupils to practise and develop essential English and mathematical skills effectively.
- Pupils completing Year 11 have not achieved well enough for the past two years. In 2017, standards declined from 2016. However, because of improvements that the school has made to how pupils are entered for different examination levels in mathematics, as well as the positive impact on pupils' progress of some staffing changes, pupils currently in Year 11 are achieving well. This is confirmed by the school's own assessment information.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Although improving this year, outcomes in the sixth form require improvement because too many students are not making consistently good progress, particularly in academic A-level courses. Students have significantly underachieved in academic courses for the past three years.
- Students in Year 12 and Year 13 are making better progress this year than they have in the past. This is because of several factors, including effective careers advice and guidance and good transition arrangements from Year 11 to Year 12. Because of these improvements, students are following courses that are well matched to their career

aspirations and academic ability. Consequently, retention rates are high. Students are also better prepared for sixth-form study than they have been in the past.

- However, progress is not yet consistently good in both year groups. An important reason why progress is not as strong as it should be is because the targets that leaders set for students are not aspirational enough. The commercial assessment system that the school uses shows that if these targets are achieved, they will only represent average progress. Nevertheless, this is an improvement on historical outcomes.
- A small number of students study vocational courses. Over time, outcomes in these subjects have been better than outcomes in academic courses.
- Students who are required to re-take GCSE mathematics or English make good progress in both subjects and improve their previous grades.
- The quality of teaching that inspectors observed during the inspection was good. This is an important reason why students are making better progress this year than they have in the past. However, even with good teaching, some students are not yet achieving their full potential because weaker teaching in the past means that they have much ground to make up.
- Training for teachers in the specific skills of post-16 teaching requires improvement to match the quality of training for teachers in the rest of the school. Opportunities for sixth-form teachers to share good practice are not routinely taken.
- The leadership of the sixth form requires improvement. Leaders do not analyse assessment information in sufficient detail. For example, they do not look at any patterns of underachievement among different groups of students, including those who have similar prior attainment. Consequently, they are not able precisely to identify how teaching may need to be adapted or improved for particular groups of students across subjects.
- Leaders have effective strategies for supporting individual students who are falling behind. Personalised support plans have a good impact on helping some individuals to catch up.
- The sixth-form curriculum is good, and it fully meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes. In addition to examination courses, students have a wide and diverse range of opportunities to take part in non-qualification activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and enrichment activities in sport and music. Students are also taught about British values and safety matters through the personal, social, health and economics education programme.
- As in the main school, behaviour in the sixth form is good and provision for students' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Sixth-form students are important role models for younger pupils and they engage enthusiastically in organising charity and community events. Some students take part in work experience, which helps those following vocational courses, particularly, to develop greater understanding of the sector that interests them. For others, it provides valuable experience to prepare them well for future employment. Many of these activities help the students to develop leadership and employability skills.

School details

Unique reference number	103541
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10047537

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
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	1,172
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	128
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Mills
Headteacher	Glen Alexander
Telephone number	0121 706 4200
Website	www.ilsley.bham.sch.uk
Email address	glen.alexander@ilsley.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The headteacher provides support to Holy Trinity Catholic School.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment at the end of Year 11. The school also meets the government's minimum standards for students' progress in the sixth form.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision at the East Birmingham Network School, South and City College and a training provider called Southside. The number of pupils who attend alternative provision is too small to be reported on.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in a wide range of subjects. Senior leaders joined inspectors for several of these observations. Inspectors also made several further short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with five groups of pupils and a group of staff, including subject leaders. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, a representative from the local authority and two leaders from the Archdiocese of Birmingham.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at policies, the school's assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its development planning, records of lesson monitoring, information about pupils' progress, safeguarding documents and samples of pupils' work.
- The views of the 36 parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. No pupils at the school completed Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. The school did not issue Ofsted's staff survey, though inspectors took account of a similar questionnaire that the school had conducted last year.

Inspection team

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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