

Maricourt Catholic High School

Hall Lane, Maghull, Liverpool, Merseyside, L31 3DZ

Inspection dates 27–28 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The leadership of the school is strong and experienced and the governing body is highly effective.
- Students behave well and there are positive relationships between students and the staff in the school.
- Processes to safeguard students are robust.
- Teaching is usually good and teachers use secure subject knowledge to support learning.
- Students' attainment at GCSE is above national averages.
- Students make good progress in a range of subject areas, and particularly in English.
- The gaps in achievement between disadvantaged students and other students nationally have closed very successfully in English and are narrowing on some measures in mathematics.
- There is a very strong ethos of care and support.
- The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength of the school.
- There is extensive provision of extra-curricular activities which enhance students' experiences.
- Leadership and provision in the sixth form are very effective and a wide range of courses are offered. Standards of achievement in the sixth form are good and improving.
- The guidance given to students about progression into further and higher education and employment is effective.
- Engagement with parents is positive and opportunities to be involved with the school are frequent.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in mathematics needs to be accelerated.
- The quality of teaching is not always consistently high and some questioning does not fully engage students or deepen their thinking.
- Marking is inconsistent and does not always indicate what students need to do to improve or expect students to act on the advice given.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school, including three joint lesson observations with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors also visited morning tutor time and an assembly.
- Inspectors observed behaviour around the school at break and lunchtime and in moving between the two school sites.
- Inspectors looked carefully at samples of students' written work in lessons and conducted specific work scrutinies of the work of students in Years 8 and 10 and in A-level subject areas in the sixth form.
- At the time of the inspection, students following A-level courses were sitting their pre-public examinations. As a result, lesson observation in Key Stage 5 was conducted in vocational subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, five groups of students, 11 governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a diocesan officer.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: the school and departmental development plans; the school's summary of its own performance; data relating to students' attainment and progress; information on attendance and exclusions; documents and records relating to behaviour and safeguarding including bullying logs and case studies; records relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning and staff development; records of the performance management of staff; minutes of the governing body meetings and subject evaluation meetings; information relating to the provision for the most able students.
- Inspectors analysed the 73 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the 94 questionnaires which were completed by staff.

Inspection team

Julie Yarwood, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector
Alison Stott	Additional Inspector
Clive Hurren	Additional Inspector
Colin Mason	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Maricourt Catholic High School is a larger than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school is situated on a split-site with the two sites being a five minute walk apart.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and supported through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is significantly below average.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- The school offers alternative provision for a small number of students at 'Impact', a local authority-run pupil referral unit and at Southport College. The school also shares courses in the sixth form with Deyes High School and Maghull High School.
- A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed since the last inspection and took up post in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the increased rigour evident in mathematics to accelerate students' progress and ensure that the current improved levels of achievement for students in the school come to fruition at GCSE level.
- Further improve the quality of teaching to support students' progress by:
 - improving the quality of routine developmental marking to ensure that students know what to do to improve and act on advice given.
 - developing questioning to engage students fully in their learning and deepen their thinking.
 - continuing to share best practice amongst teachers.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school is led and managed by an experienced and committed senior team who have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The school's strong spiritual and moral ethos permeates all aspects of its work. This leads to high standards of behaviour, positive relations and students say they feel part of a very supportive community.
- There is no sense of complacency and school leaders focus on the most appropriate areas for improvement as identified from robust data analysis and information from monitoring the quality of teaching.
- Following disappointing results in mathematics at GCSE in 2014, school leaders acted apace to address issues and implemented a plan to raise achievement in the subject area. Inspection evidence indicates that this is impacting positively and standards achieved by students currently in the school are higher.
- There is a strategic and robust process for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and this leads directly into training and support for teachers. A high level of importance is placed on staff development and in recent years, teachers have completed impressive learning journals to share good practice.
- Middle leaders present as a unified team and they are well supported and stringently challenged by the senior leadership team and by the governing body. Middle leaders are heavily involved in checking on and improving the quality of performance in their departments, and they are clear about where their priorities lie.
- Whole-school development planning is detailed and has appropriate success criteria, but progress towards targets is difficult to evaluate, as planning does not indicate interim milestones.
- School leaders have a strong commitment to equal opportunities for all and rigorously analyse the data by pupil groups to track progress. This data is used effectively by progress leaders to target any areas of underperformance.
- The use of pupil premium funding is targeted and its impact evaluated. Funding provides one-to-one tutoring for all disadvantaged students and parents are invited to an event in school which explains how the funding has been spent. Results for this group of students show positive trends of improvement at GCSE, particularly in English.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and there is an appropriate range of academic and vocational options which lead effectively to good progression into post-16 options and beyond. The curriculum promotes fundamental British values well and tolerance and respect are highly apparent in the school. Students have opportunities to vote democratically for form captains and School Council members, and, in Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), they learn about being a British citizen. Students also have opportunities to learn about faiths other than their own.
- The curriculum is enhanced by an extensive range of extra-curricular visits and opportunities both in Great Britain and abroad. Opportunities for fundraising and charity work are frequent and, as a result of the experiences and information that they receive, students are well prepared for life in modern Britain and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is strong.
- The school meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding students well. All staff receive up-to-date information regarding child protection and governors are trained in safe recruitment.
- The progress, attendance and behaviour of students attending alternative provision is effectively monitored and links with providers are good.
- There is good provision for careers guidance and, as a result, the proportion of students who progress to further and higher education is high. At each key stage, parents are fully involved in choices made by students and are invited to meetings with school staff to discuss options.
- There are many opportunities for parents to engage with the school. Parents are invited to feedback following subject reviews and are able to question subject leaders about the work in their area. Parents are involved in the options process in Year 9 and when students are selecting their future pathways at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form.
- The local authority knows the school well and provides good support, in particular for the headteacher and in an extensive training programme for governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective and is fully involved in the life of the school.
 - Governors know the school well, have a clear and accurate view of its strengths and areas for

- development and, as a group, represent a strong element in the school's capacity to improve further.
- Governors have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching and the school's performance data, and play an extensive part in monitoring departmental quality through their link governor roles, departmental reviews and examination analysis meetings. Senior and middle leaders are held robustly to account by the governing body for outcomes and middle leaders are required to present and explain their achievement data to members.
 - Governors have an excellent knowledge of performance management and ensure that decisions on salary increments are used to reward good teaching and tackle underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. They are polite and well mannered towards each other, to staff and to visitors.
- The school's ethos of care makes a strong contribution to students' behaviour; one student who spoke to an inspector commented that 'our school is a compassionate school and it feels like a family where everyone cares for each other'.
- In lessons, students work cooperatively with each other and hardly any instances of low-level disruption were observed by inspectors.
- Students move between lessons and between sites in a calm and mature manner and despite cramped corridors in some parts of the school, are patient in waiting to allow safe movement to occur.
- School leaders maintain and analyse detailed behaviour and incident logs. 'Red card' referrals to the school's internal exclusion room are declining and rates of exclusion are low.
- Incidents of bullying are logged and an anti-bullying policy is in place; students report that issues are dealt with effectively by staff. Different types of bullying are acknowledged but not always analysed by type which makes the tracking of trends over time more difficult.
- Students report that the school takes a strong stance on derogatory comments such as, for example, homophobic language.
- Rates of attendance are better than the national average and records seen on inspection indicate that punctuality has improved.
- The absence rates for students known to be eligible for free school meals are higher than nationally. This area has been targeted by the school and figures show some improvement this year.
- The mechanisms for checking on the behaviour and safety of students attending alternative provision are robust and the links with providers are strong.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Students report that they feel safe in school and this is endorsed by the vast majority of parents who completed the online questionnaire and by all staff who completed the staff survey.
- School staff are effective at identifying students at risk and detailed logs of follow-up work are kept. The pastoral support offered by learning mentors makes a significant contribution to the safety and well being of students.
- The movement of students between the two sites of the school is managed appropriately and staff supervise the crossing point between the two areas.
- Risk assessments for the extensive range of visits are completed thoroughly.
- Safe practices are promoted in the curriculum. Students demonstrated a particularly good understanding of e-safety and safe practices around this.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and structure learning activities effectively to support students' achievement.

- Classrooms expectations are made clear and students cooperate well with their teachers and with each other.
- An effective range of resources is used in most subject areas to stimulate learning and discussion, and teachers listen carefully to students' responses to address any misconceptions or misunderstanding.
- Literacy skills are promoted well across the curriculum and in many lessons the use of key words to support learning is a feature. Literacy support was effectively demonstrated in a Year 9 geography lesson observed by an inspector, where students' understanding of written information about Ghana was carefully established and supported before moving on.
- Students' resilience in learning is well promoted. There is an expectation that work is completed and this is largely the case.
- Students are encouraged to read, particularly in English where time is dedicated at the beginning of each lesson for reading.
- In mathematics, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to question students effectively and support their achievement. Numeracy skills were observed being further supported in science, as students in Year 11 were encouraged to consider mathematical conventions when drawing graphs.
- Inspectors saw very little teaching assistant support taking place in class but students who spoke to inspectors were positive about the support that they receive.
- Inspectors saw some evidence of very effective questioning to engage and deepen the thinking of students. This is however not consistent in all lessons and school leaders recognise that this is an area for further improvement.
- Whilst students present good attitudes to learning, a thirst for knowledge is sometimes lacking where activities undertaken are more mundane or where students are not sufficiently challenged.
- Verbal feedback given to students in lessons is good and helps them to understand how to improve. The marking of half-termly assessed pieces of work supports this further.
- Some strong, developmental marking is securely in place. This is however not consistently established and, in some instances, day-to-day routine marking lacks regularity or quality and, as a result, does not support the acceleration of progress.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start at the school with above average standards of prior attainment. The percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, in recent years has been consistently above the national average.
- Standards of achievement in English are particularly impressive and show further improvement in 2014, with the vast majority of students achieving expected progress and almost half making better than expected progress.
- In mathematics, attainment dipped in 2014 and levels of progress were disappointing. Evidence of achievement collected on inspection indicates that the standards for students currently in the school is stronger and the predictions for GCSE in 2015, based on robust moderation, show a picture of improvement.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students is supported by the school through a programme of one-to-one tutoring. The gap in achievement in English between this group of students and their peers has closed very successfully. From all starting points, higher proportions of the group made better than expected progress than other students nationally.
- In 2014, GCSE performance in English showed that the standard attained by disadvantaged students was approximately one third of a grade lower than their peers in school but one sixth of a grade higher than other students nationally. In mathematics in 2014, the gap in attainment for this group of students was one grade lower than their peers both in school and others nationally.
- In mathematics, gaps in progress from most starting points for disadvantaged students are closing when compared with other students nationally, but at a slower rate than in English. There is further work to be done to ensure that progress is accelerated and this aspect remains a focus for the school.
- Students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. Their standards of achievement are very effectively tracked by the special educational needs coordinator. The school's nurture group facility provides intensive support and current data indicates that students who benefitted from this are achieving well.

- The progress of the most able students is tracked as a discrete group and in most subject areas they achieve well. The most able students in Years 7 and 8 benefit from a 'scholarship programme' which supports their achievement and aspiration. High standards of achievement for this group are less well promoted in mixed-ability teaching settings.
- The progress made by the small number of students who attend alternative provision is carefully tracked by the school. Well thought-out additional input in English and mathematics is provided for students to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by time spent away from school. Alternative provision is providing appropriate support for the overall standards of achievement of the group.
- The school previously entered some students early for GCSEs in English and mathematics and in January 2015, as a deliberate strategy, entered a specifically targeted group of lower attaining students for GCSE mathematics.

Sixth form provision

is good

- The leadership of the sixth form is very strong and there is a highly aspirational drive for improvement.
- The curriculum offered is appropriate for the students and there are opportunities to study academic and vocational subjects. The curriculum is broadened through partnerships with other local high schools, which enable students to choose from a wide range of courses and to study a blend of vocational and academic subjects.
- The progress made by students following vocational subjects is very high when compared with national figures.
- The achievement of students following academic pathways shows a steady trend of improvement over time and the rate of progress is now in-line with national figures.
- Students who have not yet secured grades A to C in English or mathematics at GCSE have opportunities to re-sit but the success rate for conversion to grade C is not yet high.
- Teaching in the sixth form is securely good and marking in this key stage is a particular strength. Comments made by teachers on students' work are helpful and diagnostic, clearly indicating the strengths of the work, the areas to develop and the progress made towards targets.
- The curriculum is significantly enhanced by an extensive programme of enrichment visits and opportunities all of which are valued by students. These include visits to higher education establishments, sporting and cultural opportunities, work experience, charity fundraising and leadership opportunities within school.
- Students in the sixth form are fully integrated into the life of the school and take a key role in attending and supporting events. They behave well and attendance is good and improving.
- Transition into the sixth form is supportive and parents are fully involved in the process. An information evening is held for parents to give advice on funding higher education.
- Students receive very effective guidance on opportunities available to them post-18 and the proportion of students who progress to higher education courses is high.

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	104960
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	448282

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

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	1,387
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sr Mary Teresa
Headteacher	Mr Brendan McLoughlin
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2009
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