

Our Lady's Catholic High School

St Anthony's Drive, Fulwood, Preston, PR2 3SQ

Inspection dates 28–29 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Select	2
	This inspection:	Select	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- All students make outstanding progress because teachers plan lessons that are expertly matched to the needs of all learners.
- As a result of all staff knowing all students extremely well, there are finely tuned systems, policies and procedures in place. Staff provide valuable and personalised support which enables students to make outstanding progress.
- Students enjoy school and show very good attitudes to learning. They genuinely care about school; one student stated, 'the headteacher is passionate about school and you can't help but feel passionate too!'
- A key element in the sustained excellent performance at GCSE is the personalised learning that is provided for each student. The school's wide-ranging extra activities enrich students' lives and are very enthusiastically supported.
- Excellent behaviour in and around school means that students get on very well together. They enjoy helping each other and support each other's learning. Occasionally, form tutor time is not used effectively enough.
- Senior leaders rigorously pursue excellence. They communicate their vision extremely well to staff, students and governors.
- The governing body is highly committed and brings a wealth of experience to help the school continually develop and improve.
- Links with parents are strong and they are very supportive of the school. One parent stated, 'children are encouraged to work hard, take part in a wide range of activities and are guided by excellent teachers and support staff. The school is led extremely effectively.'
- Although there is some outstanding practice the use of digital technology to aid learning is inconsistent.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons taught by 40 teachers and an inspector heard a group of students read. All members of the senior leadership team carried out joint lesson observations with inspectors.
- The inspectors looked at the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View), prior to and during the inspection. In total there were 124 responses on-line and two written responses.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including, the school development plan, students' work, progress data, minutes of meetings of the governing body, attendance data and records showing how the school carers for and protects students.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, representatives from the governing body, members of staff and a representative from the local authority.

Inspection team

Jane Millward, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Shirley Gornall	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christine Addison	Additional Inspector
Nigel Pressnell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an averaged sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is about half the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is average and slowly rising as is the proportion with English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is very low at around one third of the national average.
- An average proportion of students is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs.
- A lower than average proportion of students joins or leave the school at times other than the normal transition points.
- A small number of students study courses off-site in vocational subjects such as hair and beauty and engineering.
- The school meets the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that form tutor time is always used well to promote achievement.
- Share more widely outstanding practice evident in school, for the benefit of students and teachers, including the use of digital technology to aid learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Lesson observations and the school's data show sustained and continually improving progress in students' learning. Students' excellent achievement is evident in all subjects and is consistently improving due to outstanding teaching and high quality care, support and guidance. The school's record of students' success places it in the top 10% of schools nationally in terms of the progress they make overall.
- Students join the school with starting points that are average in most subjects. The standards they reach at GCSE are significantly higher than those found nationally and have risen strongly over the last three years. Almost all students achieve five good GCSE grades and around four-fifths achieve five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics.
- Overall a third of grades achieved by students are at A* and A. This represents consistently excellent progress across subjects. Performance in the school's specialist subjects of mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) is outstanding and standards achieved in religious studies are exceptionally high.
- Students who are eligible for the pupil premium achieve significantly better than their peers nationally. Gaps in performance between this group and other students in the school are closing due to precise interventions for anyone at risk of underachieving. The funding is used to provide one- to-one tuition, summer school and additional time for form tutors to develop and maintain action plans for individual students. All these activities contribute to students' excellent achievement.
- Students who are disabled or with special educational needs make outstanding progress because staff consistently support their learning, encourage their independence and involve their parents effectively in helping them to achieve challenging individual targets.
- A few students study courses off-site in work-related subjects such as hair and beauty and engineering. The majority of the time is, however, spent in school. They make the same excellent progress as their peers.
- The school enters students early for GCSE English and mathematics as part of its strategy to raise achievement. This decision has been carefully considered and is regularly evaluated. The highest attaining students take further mathematics qualifications in preparation for sixth form study. They achieve highly in their additional courses. All students continue to study both English and mathematics throughout their time in school.
- Most students are enthusiastic and competent readers who regularly read for pleasure, an activity that the school encourages and celebrates. Students who have low standards in reading on entry to the school are supported very well by their teachers and teaching assistants so that they catch up. Standards in writing are high due to the school's considerable efforts to ensure that all teachers are confident in developing students' writing skills.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Exciting and well-structured teaching enables students to make outstanding progress. Lessons are purposeful, highly relevant and stimulating. As a result, students are motivated to learn, as one told an inspector, 'I enjoy school because lessons are interesting.'
- Parents agree that their children are taught well. Lessons consistently challenge students, leading to excellent progress. Such lessons are characterised by:
 - strong sequencing of activities
 - well-structured tasks with quick pace of learning
 - highly effective questioning which is directed to individual learners, for example, in a modern foreign language lesson where the teacher made excellent use of target language with high expectations and challenge which ensured all students made outstanding progress

- careful adaptation of lessons as students progress with their learning
 - activities that encourage collaboration and joint working
 - tasks that develop resilience and perseverance.
- Teachers' marking provides students with precise guidance on how to improve their work. In many instances, students are seen to respond to their teachers' comments, for example, correcting spellings in geography work.
 - Students are highly positive about learning and show excellent attitudes in lessons. They are willing to participate and work very well in group activities. For example, in a science lesson students made outstanding progress when they learnt about puberty because their behaviour was exceptional and their mature attitudes enabled the learning to move on at a rapid pace.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Absolute respect between students and staff results in outstanding behaviour. Students enjoy coming to school and relish the opportunities they are given. They feel safe and support each other in a wide range of activities. For example, student prefects support younger students and Year 10 students stay after school to run the homework club for Year 7 students.
- Students show an awareness of different types of bullying and report that 'it's not tolerated here!' They respect each other's differences and value the cultural differences of students across the school. This supports their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are well supported to develop their own views and are taught effectively to manage risk. Leaders in school regularly monitor behaviour. Detailed logs record any incidents of poor behaviour and action is quickly put in place if any incidents do occur.
- Students are polite and courteous. This is shown by the many positive letters the school has received from members of the public. For example, one comment stated, 'a pleasure to travel with such a nice bunch of young people!' when travelling on public transport. Parents also agree that behaviour is outstanding.
- Attendance is above the national average. Systems are in place to monitor absence which have been highly effective and result in an improving rate of attendance. Students are punctual and exclusions are very infrequent.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's commitment, quiet determination and consistent approach to improving the school are recognised by staff and students who share his high expectations. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching has improved. The headteacher has created a climate where staff feel valued and contribute to providing an education where students thrive.
- The senior leadership team is united in its approach and leaders' skills complement each other effectively. The secret of the school's success is the tireless focus of all leaders on improving standards and developing teaching and learning. The school's specialism is very well led and managed.
- The monitoring of the pupil premium funding is very effective and the impact of this resource is clearly measured. Students' rates of progress, behaviour and attendance are rigorously checked to ensure that everyone achieves their challenging targets.
- Leaders know the school very well. They accurately assess the strengths and priorities and work relentlessly to improve outcomes. Leaders tackle discrimination and ensure all groups of students are treated equally. This means all groups perform very well.
- The headteacher uses rigorous methods to develop the way in which targets can be used to further improve teachers' performance. There is a clear link between lesson observations, feedback, roles and responsibilities and performance management targets. Any identified weaknesses in teaching quickly become a focus for improvement. Most of the teachers use exciting methods to ensure students' learning is memorable.

- Subject leaders have worked hard to make sure they improve the areas for which they hold responsibility. They know strengths and areas to improve and have effective plans to make a difference. Plans have measurable success criteria which ensure senior leaders and governors hold subject leaders to account for their actions.
- Form tutors devise individual learning plans for all students which are thoroughly checked. These include monitoring of academic progress, behaviour, attendance and involvement in school activities. This results in students making effective progress in all aspects of school life. However, the time spent with students is not consistently used well enough by all form tutors.
- The curriculum meets students' needs well. The school has worked hard to embed the good practice in literacy across all subjects. This has resulted in improvements in students' reading, writing and speaking skills. Activities are well planned, and support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- The local authority adviser has provided a range of support for the school that has been well-received. The school is working with a range of partners where they share the outstanding practice found in school, for example, using the 'moodle' to share interactive technology in a variety of subjects. However, the school acknowledges that the work across the school could be shared to a greater extent.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly skilled, well informed and insightful. Governors are acutely aware of the school's strengths and priorities and offer both support and challenge to secure further improvement. Governors are knowledgeable about standards and rigorously check on the school's actions. They understand how the pupil premium funding is allocated and check that it is providing the necessary support for those students who qualify for it. They work very closely with the senior leaders and the annual strategy meeting between the governing body and senior leaders secures effective strategic direction. Governors are determined to support the school to, as the Chair of the Governing Body stated, 'give students the best possible start for the next stage of their lives.' Individual governors are linked to subject areas where they take an active role in checking the success. They monitor all aspects of school life and report back regularly on their findings.

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	119779
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	403412

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	895
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Rydeard
Headteacher	Mr Nigel Ranson
Date of previous school inspection	November 2007
Telephone number	01772 326900
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