

Inspection of a good school: The Catholic High School, Chester

Old Wrexham Road, Handbridge, Chester, Cheshire CH4 7HS

Inspection dates: 30 November and 1 December 2021

Outcome

The Catholic High School, Chester continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, at The Catholic High School, Chester achieve well. They enjoy school. Relationships between pupils and teachers are strong and based on mutual respect. Pupils value the sense of community within the school.

Pupils and students appreciate the high expectations that teachers have for their achievement. Pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum. In most subjects, pupils and students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn well.

Pupils and students are safe, happy and content. They said that if bullying occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils understand and accept each other's differences. They support each other well.

Leaders and teachers have raised their expectations of pupils' behaviour. Teachers and pupils consistently follow the routines that leaders have put in place. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have strengthened the personal development curriculum to address pupils' social and emotional needs. Leaders have reintroduced extra-curricular activities so that pupils and students can develop their talents and interests. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, told inspectors that they are excited to be going on trips and tours once again.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Senior leaders and staff share high aspirations for all pupils. Together, they are committed to providing a high-quality education for all pupils. Trustees and governors know the school well. They provide effective support and challenge to ensure that leaders' ambitions are realised. Staff morale is high. They appreciate leaders' strategies to reduce staff workload and consider staff well-being.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that allows pupils to study an appropriate range of subjects. Leaders are working innovatively to increase the proportion of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects, including a modern foreign language.

In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge that they want pupils and students to learn. Subject leaders have made sure that this knowledge is well organised across subject areas. However, in a small number of subjects across Years 7 to 11, leaders have not planned the curriculum as well. In these subjects, leaders have not identified the essential knowledge that pupils should gain or the order in which it should be taught. This means that some pupils do not develop the rich body of subject knowledge that they should.

Leaders provide a wide range of training opportunities to help teachers to develop their knowledge and skills. For the most part, teachers deliver the curriculum well. Teachers use their subject expertise to provide pupils with clear explanations of new ideas and curriculum content. Added to this, in most subjects, teachers use assessment strategies effectively to identify pupils' missing knowledge. Teachers use this information well to help pupils with the next steps in their learning. Typically, teaching builds on what pupils have previously learned. Teachers' subject expertise is especially evident when teaching in the sixth form. In the sixth form, students learn particularly well.

Leaders' early identification of the needs of pupils with SEND means that they receive effective support from Year 7. However, a small number of pupils with SEND are not learning as well as they should. This is because some teachers do not use the information that they have to support these pupils to access the curriculum effectively enough.

Leaders and teachers quickly identify pupils who struggle to read fluently and with understanding. They provide these pupils with extra support so that they can catch up quickly with their reading knowledge. This is helping these pupils to access the wider curriculum. Across the school, most pupils enjoy reading. The refurbished library is increasingly popular.

Leaders' promotion of pupils' wider development is effective. Leaders place as much emphasis on personal development as they do on academic excellence. All pupils study a well-planned personal development curriculum. Pupils benefit from an increasing number of enrichment activities. These include debating club, sports, drama and music activities. Sixth-form students are excited about their planned European music tour of Italy. It is leaders' aim that all pupils will learn new skills and find something that is their passion.

Pupils are typically well mannered, polite and courteous. They are attentive and well behaved in class and during social times. Pupils told inspectors that they can learn without disruption.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at The Catholic High School, Chester. Leaders provide staff with a comprehensive range of safeguarding training. Staff are alert to the potential risks that pupils may face. They use the school's safeguarding systems to pass on concerns to leaders in a timely manner. Leaders ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need, involving outside agencies when necessary.

Pupils are taught to understand the dangers of the internet. Recently, leaders have provided pupils with more information about the impact of sexual harassment. This has helped pupils to gain a better understanding of this important issue.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects in Years 7 to 11, leaders have not identified the essential knowledge that pupils should learn and remember. Added to this, in these subjects, leaders have not thought carefully enough about the order in which curriculum content should be delivered. This means that some pupils do not build on their prior learning as effectively as they should. Leaders should ensure that the curriculums in these remaining subject areas are well planned and organised so that pupils can learn effectively.
- Some teachers do not use the information that they receive about some pupils with SEND well enough. As a result, some SEND pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders should check that all teachers understand how to use the information that they receive to better support pupils with SEND with their learning.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	139343
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10199682
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	843
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	156
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Bernard Larkin
Headteacher	Cathryn McKeagney
Website	www.christofidelis.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 March 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 at three providers.
- This is a Catholic school. The last inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 took place in November 2016.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, three members of the governing body, a representative of the board of trustees, subject leaders and groups of staff and pupils.

- The lead inspector held a separate telephone call with a representative of the Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, French and history. Inspectors reviewed curriculum plans with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors also spoke with subject leaders, scrutinised curriculum plans and visited lessons in other subject areas.
- Inspectors held meetings with the leaders responsible for the school's safeguarding arrangements. They also scrutinised leaders' safeguarding records, including pre-employment checks for staff. Inspectors evaluated leaders' procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about their well-being and workload. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils from different year groups. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Gary Kelly, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Christine Veitch

Ofsted Inspector

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