

# Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Academy

St Walburga's Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 7EQ

---

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school to learn. They feel happy and safe at St Mary's Catholic Academy. Staff set high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and well mannered. They enjoy positive relationships with one another. Pupils reported that derogatory language is rare. They respect each other's differences.

Pupils said that when bullying happens, teachers respond quickly and resolve any issues effectively. Pupils are confident that staff will deal well with any concerns that they have.

Leaders have ensured that pupils follow a suitably ambitious curriculum. Pupils achieve well overall. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Students in the sixth form receive an especially strong quality of education.

Pupils experience a wealth of opportunities which interest and inspire them. They take part enthusiastically in clubs and sports, including chess club, hockey and cricket. They also enjoy visits, for example to London, and taking part in a community youth project.

Parents are very supportive of the school. A typical comment made was, 'My child has been very happy there.'

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

Trustees and leaders have high ambitions for pupils. Most pupils and students, including those with SEND, achieve well in a broad range of subjects. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, study a wide range of courses. All pupils follow the same ambitious curriculum. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders have put in place a curriculum which has the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects at its heart. They have made efforts to strengthen the modern foreign languages curriculum in key stage 3. This has begun to increase the number of pupils who choose to study this subject at key stage 4. As a result, the proportion of pupils following the EBacc suite of subjects is beginning to rise, although it remains low. This limits the choices that some pupils can make about their future.

Subject leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge that pupils should learn. Leaders have also considered the order in which to teach essential information. Subject curriculums are carefully organised. However, in a small number of subjects, the curriculum has some gaps in content at key stage 3. This affects pupils' understanding of these subjects.

Teachers ensure that pupils revisit their learning regularly. Teachers give pupils opportunities to practise and build on what they already know. This helps pupils to remember the curriculum.

Many teachers have a detailed knowledge of their curriculum subjects. They use their subject expertise skilfully to help pupils remember and apply their learning. Teachers in the sixth form have particularly strong subject expertise.

Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers provide effective support so that these pupils can learn the same ambitious curriculum as other pupils in the school.

Teachers use assessment strategies well. They spot and address pupils' misconceptions quickly and effectively, including for pupils with SEND. Teaching staff provide effective support to pupils in lessons. This helps pupils move on to new learning confidently and successfully.

Pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read are supported well. They receive specialist support from staff to help them to read more fluently. This improves these pupils' confidence in reading and helps them to better access the curriculum.

Pupils show positive attitudes towards their learning. Typically, pupils learn well in a calm environment with few interruptions. Teachers ensure that there are clear routines which contribute to an orderly atmosphere in and out of lessons.

Pupils benefit from a strong programme of personal development. This includes age-appropriate relationships and sex education and health education. Pupils learn about other cultures and beliefs. Teachers prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Pupils receive a strong careers education, information, advice and guidance programme. A high proportion of pupils move on to further education and training, including those pupils with SEND. In the sixth form, many students progress on to university.

Trustees provide effective support for leaders. They know the school well and provide a well-defined direction for improvement. Trustees challenge leaders to develop further the quality of education for all pupils.

Leaders are passionate about supporting the well-being of staff. They put a strong emphasis on professional development, including research. They care for their staff. Teachers appreciate the efforts made by leaders to reduce their workload. Staff enjoy working at the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are clear about the dangers that pupils and students in the sixth form may face. This includes peer-on-peer abuse. Staff are vigilant for safeguarding concerns and report these in a timely manner.

Leaders quickly identify whether pupils need additional support from external agencies. They ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Pupils are clear about how they can get support when needed. They learn how to keep safe from risks, including knife crime. Pupils also learn about online safety.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Too few pupils follow the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. This can limit their options in later life. Leaders should ensure that they continue to increase the proportion of pupils who follow English Baccalaureate subjects.
- In a small number of subjects, there are gaps in the curriculum at key stage 3. This limits pupils' knowledge and skills in these areas. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced in all subjects.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141257
<b>Local authority</b>	Blackpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	10226338
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,214
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	165
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Liz Kelly
<b>Headteacher</b>	Simon Eccles
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-mary.blackpool.sch.uk">www.st-mary.blackpool.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a Roman Catholic school. The school's most recent section 48 monitoring inspection took place in February 2017.
- The school is part of The Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust.
- A small proportion of pupils attend alternative provision at four registered providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chair of trustees and the chair of governors, other trustees and governors, a representative from the diocese, the school improvement partner and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors also met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages and English. They visited a sample of lessons in these subjects, discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, reviewed pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views of behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- An inspector looked at safeguarding policies and reviewed leaders' records of checks on the suitability of staff and governors. They met with the leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about leaders' work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included some free-text responses.

### **Inspection team**

David Hampson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Timmons	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Dympna Woods	Ofsted Inspector
Ahmed Marikar	Her Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022