

# St Mary's Catholic High School

Newbold Road, Upper Newbold, Chesterfield, S41 8AG

## Inspection dates

2–3 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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 aspects of the school's work are outstanding. This is because the leaders of the school and the governing body have established a clear ethos around high expectations for all students. Leaders know the school extremely well and have clear plans in place to develop it further.
- Students in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 make outstanding progress during their time in the school, relative to their starting points. At the end of Key Stage 4, their attainment is high compared to national expectations and benchmarks.
- Approximately half of the teaching seen during the inspection was outstanding. The school's records over time show that, typically, around two-thirds of lessons are outstanding across the school with particular strengths in mathematics and history.
- There is exemplary behaviour around the school. Students are unfailingly courteous and polite to adults, and each other. Students say that bullying is not a concern and it is very rare for any disruption to occur in lessons. Students are kept very safe in the school and it is clear from their attitudes to school and their attendance that students are extremely proud to be a part of the community of St Mary's Catholic High School.
- The sixth form is good as the progress that students make is outstanding in Year 12 and good in Year 13, compared to national expectations. However, attainment is high compared to national averages at the end of the sixth form.

## Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, inspectors observed 42 lessons and two assemblies. Some lessons were observed jointly with members of the school's leadership team. Students were also observed around the school and as they were arriving and leaving school.
- Lessons were observed across the full range of the curriculum, including a good proportion in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Similar numbers of lessons were observed across the three key stages. Although one lesson was observed in religious education, no conclusions were drawn about the religious content of the lesson as this will be the subject of a section 48 inspection later in the term.
- Meetings were held with a wide range of staff, including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also heard students read, met with two groups of students and two members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of Parent View, where 24 responses had been received, alongside the school's historical surveys of parents' views of the school. No requests were received from parents to talk to inspectors during the inspection.
- Various documents, including self-evaluation summaries, data, minutes from meetings of the governing body and departmental reviews were scrutinised during the inspection.

## Inspection team

David Muir, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Peckham

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lin Bartlett

Additional Inspector

William Cassell

Additional Inspector

Linda Austin

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic High School is a large secondary academy. It converted to Catholic voluntary academy status in August 2012. It is located in the Diocese of Hallam and primarily serves the Catholic community in north-east Derbyshire, although some students travel from areas further afield such as Sheffield and north Nottinghamshire.
- The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds or who have English as an additional language is low compared to national averages.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, supported at school action, is below average. The percentage supported at school action plus or who have statements is low.
- The academy meets the current government floor standard.

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

- Ensure that the high proportion of outstanding teaching that is evident in the school is used to inform and support improvements in the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion of teachers deliver outstanding lessons.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- Attainment is high at the end of Key Stage 4, and has been for at least three years, compared to all significant national benchmarks. In 2012 83% of students gained at least 5 GCSEs at grades A\*-C including English and mathematics and 97.5% gained 5 GCSEs at grades A\*-C. Students' capped average points score (their best eight subjects at GCSE) has been significantly above national averages for the past three years.
- During their time in the school students make outstanding progress by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 4, compared to other schools nationally. The progress students make in mathematics and history is conspicuously strong. This is due to the higher proportion of outstanding teaching in these areas. The school's analysis of different groups of students shows that they all make outstanding progress.
- Where there is evidence of a very small number of students making less progress than expected, the school has analysed closely why this has happened. In all cases, the school was able to present strong evidence of external factors which have caused this to happen. In these cases, the students have still made strong progress taking in to account their starting points and circumstances.
- The school's strong curriculum, which meets the needs of all students at Key Stages 3 and 4, supports their outstanding achievement. The strong curriculum also promotes the outstanding progress made in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The high quality support provided for students who need it, including those who are entitled to receive the pupil premium, is extremely well-tailored to meet their needs and allows them to make the same outstanding progress as other students. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who need extra help with their reading, also receive high quality individualised support which enables them to improve.
- In the sixth form, achievement overall is good. From their high starting points at the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is high at the end of Key Stage 5, compared to national averages. Although students make outstanding progress on AS-level courses, they make good progress in the second year of their A-level courses.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- During the inspection, around half of teaching observed was graded as outstanding, although the school's assessment suggests that this proportion is typically closer to two-thirds. In the lessons which were jointly observed with a member of the school's leadership team, there was a clear correlation between the judgments of the inspector and the leader. This confirms that the school's assessment over time is accurate. During the inspection, the majority of lessons observed in the sixth form were graded as outstanding.
- In the best lessons, there are impressive ranges of tasks and activities to keep students engaged and enthused throughout. Teachers use questioning which keeps students on their toes and digs deeply into their understanding of what is being taught. The best teaching also provides rapid pace and well-planned opportunities for students to thoroughly assess their own work and that of their peers. Where teaching is not outstanding, this is due to teachers talking for too long and not providing students with sufficient opportunities to develop their independence and self-

assessment skills.

- Students are clear, through various methods of feedback by the teacher, including marking in their books, about the progress that they are making. They are also clear on their targets in all subjects and what they need to do to reach their target grades.
- Teachers and other staff fully understand their roles in supporting and promoting the school's ethos. This was clearly demonstrated by the commitment of staff in giving their time during lunch and after school in order to run clubs, support classes and other extra-curricular activities.
- During lessons, there is a strong focus on developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. This is achieved through the school's promotion of an awareness of those less fortunate or who live in challenging circumstances. The school also provides many opportunities to broaden students' horizons through visits to a wide range of places, including exchanges and stays in France, Germany and Spain. The school also has a strong link with a school in Burkina Faso, which it supports through fund-raising.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. The school presents as a warm and welcoming community. Students demonstrate impressively positive attitudes to learning. They agree that it is very rare for there to be any disruption to learning in lessons. Staff promote positive behaviour by acting as role models and implementing the behaviour policy consistently across the school.
- The school's annual inter-faith week has traditionally provided students with access to speakers from different backgrounds and religions. This is now being developed further by linking with a multi-cultural school in a nearby city, so that students are able to meet peers who come from different backgrounds, religions and heritages, so that they can share experiences.
- Students are proud to be members of this school. Their enjoyment is evidenced by what they told inspectors and by their high levels of attendance. This is also reflected in the extremely high proportion of students who stay on in to the sixth form. Of those who continue in to Year 12, all continue in to Year 13. The responses to Parent View also support this; all parents who responded agreed that they would recommend the school to another parent.
- Students feel safe and they say that bullying is rare. When incidents have happened, students say that they have been dealt with effectively by staff. Students say that they are happy to confide in members of staff if they have a problem, but they are also aware of other routes they could take, such as sixth formers with responsibilities or a confidential e-mail address. All parents who responded also agree that their child is safe in the school.
- The school has partnerships with other agencies and professionals to provide support and alternative provision where required. Strong systems are in place to ensure that full risk assessments and safety checks are carried out for any activities or visits. This is also the case for health and safety aspects around the school's accommodation, such as the regular checking of equipment, including in classrooms such as design and technology, and science.

**The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The school has been led outstandingly well by the headteacher and his strong leadership team. They have been key to creating and disseminating the strong ethos to all in the school community.
- The school has very strong systems in place for the collection and analysis of evidence related to the school's performance. Leaders are acutely aware of where their strongest teaching is and where improvements are needed. They are now developing a clear focus on moving the good teaching on, so that it becomes outstanding.
- Teachers, and other staff, are monitored closely through robust performance management procedures and the use of the Teachers' Standards. Objectives for measuring the performance of all staff are closely linked to the school's improvement priorities. Staff who are at risk of underperforming are provided with support to enable them to improve the quality of their work.
- The outstanding curriculum ensures that students are ready for the next stage of their lives. It meets the needs of all students by providing clear academic and vocational pathways. The school has links with other providers so that the vocational route can be supplemented externally. The sixth form curriculum remains largely academic in nature, but students receive high-quality guidance and support should they prefer to consider a vocational option when they reach post-16. A large majority of students who attend the sixth progress to university when they leave.
- The efficacy of the curriculum is evidenced by the data, which show that for the past three years no students have failed to go in to education, employment or training when they leave St Mary's. The curriculum provides a strong focus on other aspects related to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students.
- Incidents of racism are very rare. There have been no reports of other prejudice-based bullying such as homophobia. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have their needs met well and are well included in all areas of the school.
- The school has a very strong community and links with the community which it serves. Responses from parents show that they overwhelmingly value the work that the school does with their children. The school has an extremely strong history of fund-raising. This included raising money for charities chosen by the students and for the partner school in Burkina Faso.
- The support provided by the diocese has helped the school to develop its strong ethos and identity and, as a result, its outstanding outcomes. This has been particularly evident in the past year, where support has been provided during the school's conversion to academy status.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - is very strong, as the governing body has a very clear awareness of the strengths of the school and know its areas for development well. Regular meetings with the headteacher and presentations from staff inform governors' understanding of the school and its work.
  - has the knowledge and skills to ask the necessary questions, so that governors can effectively hold the school to account. Their contribution to the school's work and ethos has been significant in its development into an outstanding school.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138470
<b>Local authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	408414
<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Catholic voluntary academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1285
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	295
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The Diocese of Hallam
<b>Chair</b>	Micheline Beaulieu
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sean McClafferty
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01246 201191
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