

St Monica's RC High School

Bury Old Road, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 1JH

Inspection dates

21–22 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	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.

- Attainment has been high for several years and continues to improve. By the time pupils leave in Year 11 over 80% of them gain five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in most of their subjects including English, mathematics and science.
- Achievement in English is outstanding overall although there are some small variations across year groups.
- The school ensures that disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs perform as well as their peers.
- The recently established sixth form is already good. Leaders are working hard to promote the sixth form college within the local community and to develop a wider range of courses.
- Teaching is rarely less than good and much is outstanding. Teachers are particularly adept at ensuring pupils perform well in examinations.
- Marking and feedback to pupils is usually excellent but occasionally work is not marked regularly.
- Highly effective systems to check pupils' progress ensure that any underachievement is picked up early. Strategies are quickly put in place so that pupils catch up.
- Pupils' have excellent attitudes to work and they contribute fully to the life of the school. They are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. Pupils feel safe at school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. As a result, pupils are thoroughly prepared for the future.
- All leaders and staff are proud of the school and what it has achieved. They have high expectations of themselves and of the pupils. Teachers' performance is managed extremely well.
- The governing body have worked hard to improve their own performance and as a result are able to challenge the school effectively. However, they do not always know how well the pupil premium money ensures better achievement.
- Parents are highly supportive of St Monica's. The vast majority are happy that their children enjoy attending the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons or part lessons taught by teachers. Members of the senior and middle leadership teams accompanied the inspectors on visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, staff and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 31 responses to the online Parent View survey. They also took into account the 72 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documents, including the school's own records of pupils' progress and attainment, monitoring documents, records relating to the performance management of staff and those relating to behaviour, safeguarding, attendance and the pupil premium.

Inspection team

Glynis Bradley-Peat, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Barbara O'Brien	Additional Inspector
Fiona Burke-Jackson	Additional Inspector
David Woodhouse	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils receiving pupil premium , which is additional funding given for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families, is lower than the national average.
- A smaller proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported through school action than found nationally. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is much lower than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for its pupils.
- The acting headteacher has been in post since September. Two of the deputy headteachers are also acting.
- There is a recently established sixth form.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement and provision in the sixth form so that it matches that of the main school by:
 - building upon the steps already taken to increase the number and variety of subjects on offer
 - ensuring the school promotes the sixth form centre in the local community even more effectively so that numbers increase more rapidly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Standards by the time pupils reach Year 11 are significantly above the national average and have been rising steadily over the years. Pupils' attainment is high in English and mathematics. There is little difference in the attainment of different groups of pupils.
- A much higher than average proportion of pupils taking GCSEs gain the highest grades in a wide variety of subjects. Pupils are entered in November of Year 11 for their mathematics GCSE, some pupils re-sit in the summer in order to be given the opportunity to achieve above their target grade. This policy has not affected their ability to gain the grades of which they are capable.
- The progress pupils make in the vast majority of subjects is outstanding. This includes in English and mathematics. When compared to other schools nationally, the proportions of pupils making better than expected progress from their starting points is high. The school's own records of current progress show that this picture is set to continue. Although this is the case, progress in English is good rather than outstanding in Key Stage 3.
- Students attain well in the vocational sixth form, gaining above average levels of merits and distinctions in a variety of subjects, although the school has yet to produce its first full set of vocational results. So far, there is solid evidence to show that students make good progress from their starting points during their time in the sixth form.
- Pupils make consistently good and outstanding progress in most of their lessons because teachers expect the best of them. Teachers continually check pupils' understanding through high quality questioning which promotes deeper understanding and appreciation. As a result, pupils show high levels of interest in their work.
- For example in a highly challenging history lesson about how Hitler's political aims led to much conflict, pupils had the opportunity to reflect on their own and others' views. The teacher's questions ensured that all angles were covered.
- Those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium attain similarly to their peers although girls do slightly better than boys. There is little difference in attainment measures. They often make excellent progress because of the high quality support provided. For instance, the one-to-one additional teaching in mathematics has had a very positive impact on raising attainment.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also achieve very well. Extra in-class help and tailor made support boosts the progress they make from their starting points.
- Pupils' communication and mathematical skills are developed effectively. There is more than ample opportunity in lessons for pupils to speak and listen during group and paired work. Links are carefully made between mathematics and other subjects such as geography, for example, when drawing graphs.
- Opportunities are provided in a range of lessons to develop pupils' literacy skills, however, the school is not complacent and realises there is a little more work to be done to ensure consistency across all subjects.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Much of the teaching in the school is outstanding. This has led to the swift gains in progress made across different subjects and for all groups of pupils. There is clearly exhilarating teaching occurring in many areas of the school which demonstrates teachers' passion for their subject. This motivates pupils exceptionally well and promotes a real love of learning.
- Well organised and highly effective group work is a key feature of many lessons. This is because teachers ensure pupils are given time to reflect and consider their responses to tasks or given scenarios. Teachers' timely feedback enriches and promotes further discussion. In a personal

relationship workshop' pupils gave careful consideration to the ages of responsibility and how this linked in with, for example, drug taking or staying out late. Following a film clip the groups made decisions about whether the portrayal of a theft constituted 'real theft'. Conversations were riveting and progress excellent. The lesson contributed much to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Where teaching was outstanding in geography, opportunities were taken to promote pupils' literacy. Technical vocabulary such as evapotranspiration was explored and pupils were asked to explain meanings and make links. Their understanding was further consolidated through planned discussion. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge was used very well to promote rapid progress.
- Teaching is planned very effectively and high quality questioning ensures pupils learn to think for themselves. High quality verbal feedback from teachers during lessons gives pupils information about how they can correct or improve their work. This was particularly effective in a physical education lesson where pupils rapidly improved their basketball skills.
- Teaching consistently refers to how pupils can improve their performance in examinations. Grade criteria are used regularly so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them in order to achieve the highest grades.
- Marking is exemplary in many subjects but occasionally work is not always marked regularly enough and pupils do not receive sufficient feedback about how to improve their work.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs appreciate the extra help and advice provided by teachers and teaching assistants which helps them to make excellent gains in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The vast majority of pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and want to do well. Incidents of disruption to learning are extremely rare. There is a real sense of respect evident in lessons, in corridors whilst moving from lesson to lesson and at break and lunchtimes. Pupils are polite and courteous to staff and each other. They have a great pride in the school and would highly recommend it.
- Teachers manage behaviour extremely well and as a result no learning time is lost. High quality training for staff helps to ensure that those pupils with challenging behaviour are able to improve their behaviour successfully over time. Learning mentors and other support services assist pupils extremely well.
- Pupils are fully aware of all forms of bullying including cyber bullying. Themed assemblies, personal and social education lessons and form tutor time ensure that pupils are clear about how to protect themselves from any type of risk. E-safety information includes guidance beyond the school gate. They know about different types of prejudice based and homophobic bullying but report having no experience of these. Pupils report that bullying is very rare but that they know who to speak to if it does occur. They have high levels of confidence in the school to deal with it immediately.
- Pupils have access to a confidential counselling service and a school nurse which they appreciate. All groups of pupils, including the most vulnerable, feel safe at school and have a thorough understanding of what constitutes unsafe situations.
- Pupils fulfil a plethora of duties which contribute to the smooth running of the school. For example, prefects support good behaviour during breaks and lunchtimes and work alongside midday assistants.
- The views of parents and pupils are consistently sought through the school website, external surveys and internal questionnaires. These demonstrate the importance placed by the school on attendance and achievement.
- Attendance levels are high. The school has worked extremely successfully with families to ensure that almost all pupils attend regularly. Persistent absence is very low.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The calm, highly effective leadership style of the acting headteacher and her senior team demonstrates an unrelenting focus on improvement. Nothing less than the best will do. Assessment information is analysed thoroughly and ambitious targets are set for every pupil. These are regularly checked and tweaked so that they always remain challenging.
- Improvement planning builds well on the school's strengths and focuses on paying prompt attention to identified weaknesses. Robust self-evaluation underpins this process. For example, lower attainment and slower rates of progress were identified last year in technology. The school's immediate response has rectified the situation and achievement in technology has improved significantly.
- Joint lesson observations with senior staff during the inspection confirmed the accuracy of the school's judgements. It is clear that they understand what constitutes good and outstanding teaching.
- In light of these factors, there is excellent capacity for further improvement.
- A highly effective and astute programme of training for teachers supports and improves practice. Teachers have opportunities to observe the best practice and to receive high quality coaching and mentoring.
- Rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching by leaders at all levels ensures that improvements in teaching are driven forward across all subject areas. Performance management for teachers is equally robust and the school is careful to reward only those teachers who meet their targets.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 promotes high levels of achievement and successful progression to the next stage of education. Pupils have numerous opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities including sports clubs, musical experiences, other clubs and events.
- Leaders took the bold decision to open a new sixth form in September 2011. The school is working hard to increase student numbers through improved marketing but the full impact of their work is not yet evident. In addition steps are already being taken to broaden the number and variety of courses on offer.
- The school is highly successful in tackling discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. All groups of pupils achieve extremely well.
- The local authority supports the school with a light touch. Effective help and advice is provided as appropriate.
- Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and meet all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the performance data and how it compares to other schools nationally. This enables them to ask the right questions of leaders to check what the school needs to do next to improve further. They have supported the school well to tackle previous issues. Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching in the school and understand the links between pay increases and how well teachers perform against targets set. Finances are competently managed but although this is clearly the case, governors are less familiar with how the pupil premium is spent and how it promotes achievement for disadvantaged pupils.

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	105366
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	400189

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	1,180
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Browne
Acting headteacher	Andrea Letcher
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2009
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