

Inspection of St John Plessington Catholic College

Old Chester Road, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside CH63 7LF

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected nine years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and sixth-form students at this school access a high-quality education. Leaders expect them to behave well and succeed academically. Pupils and students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), get the right support at the right time. They achieve well.

Pupils and students in the sixth form value the wider opportunities that leaders provide. For example, pupils can join the student council, the anti-bullying team and take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Students in the sixth form develop their independence and social skills through enrichment activities such as the scholars programme, community volunteering opportunities and a driving safety-awareness programme.

Most pupils are happy at school and feel safe. They know who to turn to if they are worried about anything. Despite this, some pupils are not confident that leaders will deal with their concerns.

Pupils' behaviour is improving rapidly. Most pupils behave well and act respectfully towards each other. When pupils report bullying or discrimination, staff deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils and students in the diversity and equalities group told inspectors about the work that they are doing to help everyone feel welcome.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum which is ambitious for all, including pupils with SEND. Subject leaders have thought carefully about how pupils and students build their knowledge from Year 7 to Year 13. This ensures that, in most subjects, teachers are clear about what they should teach and when to teach it. As a result, pupils learn well in most subjects.

Teachers use their subject expertise to explain new knowledge clearly. They know how to adapt their teaching for pupils with SEND because leaders have identified these pupils' needs early and accurately. As a result, pupils with SEND learn well alongside their peers. Students in the sixth form have positive attitudes to learning and they make good use of independent study time. They reported that teachers support them well.

Leaders make sure that teachers use assessment strategies effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. In most subjects, this allows teachers to check that pupils have learned what they need to. However, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not use these strategies well enough to address pupils' misconceptions. Some teachers do not check that pupils' knowledge is secure before introducing new learning. This hampers pupils' ability to build on prior learning.

Leaders are ambitious for every pupil to read confidently. They quickly and accurately identify pupils who are struggling with reading, including in the sixth form. Staff know how to help these pupils to catch up quickly. This helps most pupils to become fluent readers.

Leaders have recently raised their expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. As a result, the atmosphere around the school is becoming more positive and respectful. Leaders know that some pupils, especially in key stage 4, find it difficult to regulate their behaviour. They are taking positive action, but this work is still in the early stages. At present, it is not making enough of a difference. This means, that at times, these pupils disrupt learning in a small number of lessons.

Some pupils do not come to school as often as they should. However, leaders have taken effective action to improve this situation. Some groups of pupils, including pupils with SEND, have started attending more regularly as a result. In the sixth form, students' attendance is good.

Leaders put pupils' spiritual and moral development at the heart of school life. There are daily opportunities for pupils to reflect. Leaders have designed an effective personal development curriculum which ensures that pupils learn about respect, tolerance and how to stay safe online. As a result, pupils and students in the sixth form are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils in Years 7 to 13 access a comprehensive careers programme, including mock interviews, work experience and help with university and college applications.

Trust leaders have taken decisive action to ensure that the school continues to be led well. They support the school's leaders to ensure that pupils learn in a calm and safe environment. Trustees and governors know the school well. They focus clearly on school improvement.

A small number of parents and carers are unhappy about recent changes to the behaviour expectations. Leaders have listened to parents' views and are committed to continuing to improve behaviour.

Staff told inspectors that leaders support them well. They recognise the recent work that leaders have done to improve their well-being and workload. They explained that their voices are heard when leaders make changes that affect them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a strong culture of safeguarding. They take steps to make sure that pupils and students are safe. Leaders, governors and trustees are well informed about issues that may affect pupils' and students' safety. They ensure that all staff

receive suitable training so that they know how to spot when a pupil or student may be at risk of harm.

Leaders are tenacious in following up safeguarding concerns. They work closely and effectively with other agencies to make sure that pupils and their families get the timely help that they need. Leaders keep accurate records so that they can check that this help is effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, some teachers do not identify and address pupils' misconceptions as quickly as they should. This hinders how well some pupils build on their prior knowledge. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies effectively to check that pupils' knowledge is secure before moving on to new learning.
- A small number of older pupils do not behave as well as leaders expect. At times, this undermines the positive and respectful culture that leaders have established. Leaders should ensure that all staff implement the new behaviour policy consistently well, so that these pupils develop positive attitudes towards staff and each other.

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.

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	139031
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10226382
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	1623
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	285
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Carol Lawrence
Headteacher	Erin Wheeler (executive headteacher) Maria Sharratt (headteacher)
Website	www.stjohnplessington.com
Date of previous inspection	30 April 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Holy Family Catholic multi-academy trust.
- The current headteacher was appointed in 2019. Trustees have recently appointed an executive headteacher.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2013.
- Leaders use four unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- Leaders use an educational provision at another school in the multi-academy trust for a small number of pupils on short-term placements.
- 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 graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school has 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 spoke with the executive headteacher, acting head of school, other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector also met with members of the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees and chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, design and technology, science and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils and students about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' and students' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and students from Years 7 to 13 about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of trust board meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector spoke to representatives of the local authority and the diocese by telephone.
- Inspectors held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. Inspectors discussed safeguarding with pupils, students and staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff, pupils and students.

Inspection team

Ben Hill, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Katy Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Rix	His Majesty's Inspector
Jenny Jones	His Majesty's Inspector
Paula Crawley	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Goodwin	His Majesty's Inspector

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