

Saint Aidan's Church of England Technology College

Cartgate, Preesall, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire, FY6 ONP

Inspection dates 1–2 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is good in the large majority of lessons and some is outstanding. This is having a positive impact on the attainment and progress of students.
- Almost all students make good progress throughout the school, in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Students say they feel very safe in school and are extremely well cared for. Parents overwhelmingly support this view.
- The behaviour of students and their attitudes to learning are often exemplary. Relationships between students and with adults are first-rate.
- Attendance is above the national average and has continued to improve over recent years.
- The curriculum is well planned to meet students' individual needs and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. This also effectively supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is good.
- The quality of leadership and management from senior leaders and governors is good. They are clearly focused on driving continued improvement of teaching and student achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching and a few lessons require improvement in order to be good.
- The staff training programme does not always closely match teachers' individual needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons taught by 32 teachers. Three lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors looked closely at the school's work, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plan. The inspectors also looked at the school's information on students' progress and students' work, documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, staff and six members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 129 responses from parents recorded in the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), together with a letter from parents and one telephone conversation with a parent.
- Inspectors also took account of the 64 responses to the staff questionnaire and of the views of students during the inspection.

Inspection team

Alan Parkinson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector
Tudor Griffiths	Additional Inspector
David Woodhouse	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Saint Aidan's is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- In January 2012, a new headteacher was appointed.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those from families in the armed services and those in local authority care.)
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below the national average. The proportion of these supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school uses Myerscough College to provide some vocational courses for students in Years 10 and 11.
- The school uses one of Lancashire's Pupil Referral Units to provide alternative off-site provision for some students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always at least consistently good and more of it is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers' marking of students' work consistently provides students with clear and specific guidance on what they need to do to improve and that teachers' written comments are always followed up by students
 - ensuring that students are always set challenging targets to enable them to achieve even greater success across each year and key stage.
- Further develop the leadership and management of teaching by ensuring that the staff training programme is closely matched and tailored to teachers' individual needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is well above the national average. Over the last three years, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at A* to C including English and mathematics has risen from 57% in 2011 to 74% in 2013 and is well above the national average.
- Over the last three years the proportions of students making average progress and good progress in English and in mathematics have increased significantly and are above the national averages. Current school information indicates that this upward trend will continue.
- In 2012, the overall progress of students from their starting points was lower than expected. Following effective action taken by the school to address this and improvements to the quality of teaching, the 2013 results show that the progress made by students has improved. However, although it is too early to show that this improvement has been sustained over time, current school information shows that this upward trend is expected to continue in the future. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work confirm that current students are making good progress across the range of subjects.
- In 2013, the results indicate that the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades in English and in mathematics is well above the national average. The proportion of students achieving the higher A*/A grades in English and in mathematics is also well-above national averages. It reflects that all groups, including the more-able, make good progress in these key subjects.
- The students' target-setting processes do not always ensure that they are set more aspirational targets for each of their subjects. This tends to limit the level of progress some students are aiming to make and limits students' learning. As a result, all students do not achieve even greater success across all subjects.
- In 2012, students known to be eligible for free school meals achieved approximately one half of a GCSE grade lower than all other students in English and almost a grade lower in mathematics. However, due to the effective use of this funding to provide additional support and teaching resources, the attainment gap is closing in English and closing swiftly in mathematics. The 2013 results show that students known to be eligible for free school meals made similar progress to all other students in English and better than all other students in mathematics.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium receive additional support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, they are beginning to make at least similar progress to that made by other students, particularly in reading. The whole-school reading programme called DEAR, (Drop Everything And Read), is having a positive impact on developing students' reading and writing skills across all subject areas.
- There are no significant variations between the achievements of different groups of students over time. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs progress as well as all other students.
- The very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates.

The quality of teaching is good

- In the best lessons, where sometimes outstanding teaching was seen, students are keen to learn and make very good progress. Teaching is very well organised and planned and teachers make clear to students what they are going to learn. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and their enthusiastic delivery engages students fully in their learning. They use effective questioning to encourage students to think for themselves and develop their understanding.
- Students say they are well taught and enjoy their lessons. The good relationships between students and teachers, and between students themselves, promote positive attitudes to learning.

This enables students to work well together or to get on sensibly with their work by themselves.

- Teaching assistants are used effectively and make a significant contribution to students' learning, particularly to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs and those identified by the school for additional support. They help students to learn, develop skills and achieve well.
- Some marking of students' work by teachers is good and provides students with clear and specific written comments that tell them what they need to do to improve further. However, this good practice is not consistently applied across all areas. In addition, teachers do not always ensure that the students follow up their comments. As a result, students do not always make rapid progress. This means opportunities to take learning even further are missed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are extremely polite, well mannered and courteous towards each other and to adults, and are very welcoming to visitors.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is often impeccable. Through their positive attitudes and full participation in lessons they make an exceptional contribution to their own learning. Students are fully aware of the different forms of bullying and say that bullying is rare.
- Students say they feel very safe in school because teachers and the other adults look after them well. They also learn about keeping themselves safe. For example, they learn how to use the internet safely and learn about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- The responses to Parent View indicate that parents overwhelmingly agree their children are very safe at school, exceptionally well looked after and that they would recommend the school to other parents.
- The school's Christian ethos, school assemblies and guidance all contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are proactive in raising money for charities such as Children in Need, Red Nose Day, Brian House Children's Hospice and Happy House to support homeless children in Africa. This shows their high level of care for others.
- The school provides many opportunities for students to develop as responsible individuals. Some students take on positions of responsibility as members of the school's student leadership group, as 'bus proctors' to supervise behaviour on the school buses, or as peer mentors supporting other students. This enables them to make a significant contribution to the school community and local community.
- Attendance is high compared to national averages and this reflects well on students' very positive attitudes towards their learning, enjoyment and engagement in school.

The leadership and management are good

- The recently appointed headteacher, together with senior leaders and the governing body, knows the school well. They have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for further development. Consequently, there is a strong focus on driving continued improvements in teaching and achievement to raise standards further. Their good track record for promoting good achievement shows they are well placed to be successful towards this aim.
- The school has tackled effectively all the issues raised in the previous inspection. Consequently, it has improved significantly since that inspection.
- The school's systems for regular observations of lessons to check the quality of teaching are good. The headteacher uses this information appropriately when advising the governing body about teachers' pay awards. However, although teachers receive feedback that tells them how they can make their lessons even more effective and raise students' achievement further, the training programme provided for teachers is not sufficiently refined to always provide teachers with training opportunities that meets their specific individual needs.
- The recent improvements to systems for checking students' progress are highly effective.

Students at risk of falling behind in their learning are quickly identified and given additional support. This shows the school's commitment to offering equal opportunities for all its students.

- The curriculum provides students with an appropriate range of subjects and topics that contributes to their great enjoyment of school. A variety of school trips and visitors to the school help to enrich students' learning experiences. For example, the trip to Quarry Bank Mill to help students learn about the industrial revolution and the trip to Hothersall Lodge to study rivers as part of their geography course.
- The school makes good use of alternative provision to provide appropriate courses and support for a small number of students that enable them to be successful. The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure that these students behave well and are safe.
- The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as photography, pottery, cookery, music, gardening and various sporting activities. These activities provide something of interest for every student in the school that provide them with opportunities to develop their personal and academic skills and contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school receives very effective and valuable support from the local authority. This support has included training for governors, and advice and guidance to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides good support and challenge to senior leaders and managers. Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance over time, especially the quality of teaching and students' achievement. They have a good perception of what needs to be done to improve the school further because of their understanding of data. They use performance management systems to set appropriate and challenging targets. They understand the connection between the quality of work that staff do and the arrangements for pay progression. They have a good understanding of the school's finances including the allocation of pupil premium funding to provide additional support and a range of activities and opportunities to develop the English and mathematical skills of those students at risk of falling behind. Safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.

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	119789
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	426190

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	752
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Taylor
Headteacher	Andy Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2011
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