

Inspection of Our Lady's Catholic College

Morecambe Road, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 2RX

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils value the sense of community and friendship that they find at Our Lady's Catholic College. They enjoy the calm and purposeful atmosphere that permeates the school site. Pupils and staff recognise the considerable improvements to the school that have taken place over the last few years.

Pupils understand the high expectations that staff have for their behaviour and achievement. They fully engage in learning, and they display positive attitudes towards their education. Students in the sixth form achieve well and go on to a range of appropriately ambitious destinations. However, some pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not achieve as well as they should. This is because they have not benefited fully from the school's newly refined curriculum.

Pupils are happy at school. They appreciate the wide range of experiences on offer to develop their understanding of equality and diversity. For example, pupils are provided with rich opportunities to learn from people of different faiths and to understand the religious festivals that their peers take part in.

The school encourages pupils to 'aspire not to have more but to be more'. Pupils live out this philosophy by participating in a variety of activities to raise money for local, national and international charities. For example, pupils are currently fundraising to support their Uganda project.

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

The school has set out a clear vision for the ambitious curriculum that it offers to pupils. The curriculum clearly defines the specific knowledge and skills that pupils should learn, and the school has carefully identified the order in which this content should be taught.

The school has made sure that teachers are well trained to deliver the revised curriculum to pupils in most year groups. However, at times, the learning activities that teachers design do not support pupils to retain information or to connect new learning with what they know already. This means that some pupils are not able to build on their existing knowledge as well as they should.

For pupils in key stage 4, the revised curriculum is not as effective as it could be. While teachers use suitable assessment strategies to fill gaps in pupils' learning resulting from weaknesses in the previous curriculum, they do not support pupils to gain a deep enough knowledge of their current learning.

The school has effective and thorough processes in place to identify pupils with additional needs, including special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school works closely with a wide range of agencies to meet these pupils' individual needs. Teachers are well trained to adapt their delivery of the curriculum to support

pupils with SEND. However, at times, teachers provide insufficient opportunity for these pupils to apply what they know and can do independently.

Students in the sixth form benefit greatly from teachers' expertise and enthusiasm for the subjects that they teach. Students can access a wide range of academic and vocational courses tailored to their individual needs. This sets them up well to move on to aspirational destinations when leaving school.

The school has effective strategies in place to identify pupils who find reading more difficult. It pinpoints the needs of each pupil and provides bespoke support to help them to learn to read fluently and confidently. The school has combined this approach with a focus on building pupils' oracy skills so that they are able to communicate their learning clearly. This has had a considerable impact on how well pupils can access learning across the curriculum. Despite this, some pupils lack enthusiasm in their approach to reading for pleasure.

The school sets out clear expectations of how pupils should behave in lessons and around school. Most pupils meet the high standards of behaviour expected of them. The school provides effective support for those pupils struggling to manage their behaviour, for example by educating them about the impact of their actions on others. As a consequence, there has been a demonstrable improvement in pupils' behaviour since the last inspection. The school has ensured that there are effective systems to ensure that pupils attend school regularly.

The school promotes pupils' wider development through a carefully designed personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils engage in a range of topical and relevant discussions to encourage them to keep themselves healthy and to be well prepared for life in modern Britain. The school ensures that the PSHE curriculum is responsive to issues that are pertinent and relevant to pupils, including students in the sixth form.

Pupils value the school's comprehensive approach to careers guidance and education. They experience a wide range of opportunities to explore different careers and employment settings, which makes them well placed to make informed decisions about the next steps in their education and training.

The school has grown its leadership capacity at all levels. For example, governors have engaged with a wide range of training to ensure that they have the appropriate skills to challenge and support the school effectively. The school has identified the correct priorities to secure further improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not select the most appropriate activities to help pupils to develop their subject knowledge. This hinders some pupils, including pupils with SEND, from deepening and applying their knowledge in different contexts. It also makes it more difficult for teachers to identify pupils' misconceptions. The school should ensure that teachers are suitably equipped to design learning that supports pupils to learn the knowledge defined in the curriculum securely.
- In some subjects the school has not ensured that pupils in key stage 4 are benefiting sufficiently well from the new curriculum. This is hindering these pupils from developing long-term understanding and retaining the knowledge necessary for subsequent learning. The school should ensure that key stage 4 pupils are well equipped with the knowledge that they need to support them to progress successfully onto their next steps in education and training.
- The strategies that the school uses to help foster pupils' enjoyment of reading are not as effective as they could be. Some pupils do not enjoy reading and they do not read widely or often. The school should ensure that effective strategies are in place to help promote a love of reading across all key stages.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 119798 |
| Local authority | Lancashire |
| Inspection number | 10294336 |
| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| 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 | 1031 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 146 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Philip Jones |
| Headteacher | Helen Seddon |
| Website | www.olcc.lancs.sch.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 23 and 24 September 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- This Roman Catholic school is in the Diocese of Lancaster. The most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in February 2018. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before the end of 2025.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers and one unregistered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors met with a range of other staff during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and during lessons. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, history, mathematics, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, reviewed samples of pupils' work and spoke with some pupils.
- Inspectors also reviewed other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation documents, leaders' improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. Inspectors also spoke with staff about the school's support for their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey. They also spoke to a range of pupils during the inspection.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Elaine Mawson, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Sarah Mitchell | Ofsted Inspector |
| Paula Crawley | Ofsted Inspector |

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Kelly Leonard

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