

Archbishop Ilsley Catholic School

Victoria Road, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7XY

Inspection dates 18–19 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, the team of senior and subject leaders, and governors have driven improvements in the quality of teaching and raised achievement in this caring, friendly and improving school.
- Students, including the most able, achieve above average standards. They make good progress in English and mathematics.
- The gap is narrowing between the achievement of disadvantaged students and that of other students in the school and nationally.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs receive a good level of support and make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is good across the school in the full range of subjects. Students achieve some of the best results nationally in product design.
- The sixth form is good. Sixth form students make good progress in a wide range of subjects. They make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school as role models and ambassadors.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around school is outstanding. They show exemplary attitudes to learning and high levels of respect to adults and to each other.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students, particularly the most vulnerable, go above and beyond statutory requirements.
- The effective work of governors and school leaders to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development leads to an ethos of tolerance, respect and striving for academic excellence.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always provide enough support for the less able students.
- Not all students make the transition to sixth form studies as swiftly as they could.
- Students do not always explore science through enough practical work at Key Stage 3.
- Students do not get enough opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students’ learning in 42 lessons across the school, including in the sixth form. Of these, 14 were observed jointly with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team looked at students’ work in their books and folders.
- As well as conversations in lessons and at social times during the inspection, inspectors held discussions with four groups of students about the quality of their educational experiences and the standard of behaviour in the school. Only a very few students from Years 11 and 13 were on the school site during the inspection as they were on study leave for their examinations.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 35 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the 83 responses to a staff questionnaire. Inspectors also considered responses by parents to recent questionnaires from the school.
- The inspection team examined: the school’s own information on students’ recent and current progress; the school’s evaluation of how well it is doing and its records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Richard Boswell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alison Davies

Additional Inspector

Celia Moore

Additional Inspector

Jane Burton

Additional Inspector

Janet Duggan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Archbishop Ilsley Catholic School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. Nearly a third of students come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. A very small minority of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 11.
- A very small number of students attend full time provision off the school site at The East Birmingham Network and part-time at The Greenwood Academy.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been a large number of changes in the school's teaching staff.
- The headteacher has received support from a National Leader of Education from the Ninestiles Academy, Birmingham.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and so raise students' achievement by ensuring that:
 - the less able students are given sufficient support to ensure that they make rapid progress
 - students in Key Stage 3 have regular opportunities to conduct practical science experiments.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - senior and subject leaders make sure that students have the opportunity to practise their numeracy skills across a wider range of subjects
 - students entering the sixth form receive support in developing the skills they need to get off to the best possible start in their studies.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the governing body have responded well to the areas for improvement from the last inspection and to recommendations from subsequent monitoring visits. The increased capacity of the school's team of senior and middle leaders has led to improvements in achievement and the quality of teaching. The already good behaviour and safety in the school have flourished and are now outstanding.
- School leaders have made the necessary changes with the overwhelming support of staff, parents and students. They have put in place an effective and rigorous system for checking the quality of teaching and supporting teachers in improving their practice. Leaders and governors have not been afraid, however, to have difficult conversations and to tackle underperformance whenever required.
- Senior leaders check the work of subject leaders much more rigorously than at the time of the previous inspection. Subject leaders are now more effective because they are held accountable for their responsibilities and check the work of their staff in greater detail. There is now strong leadership in English as well as in mathematics, and some departments, such as product design, promote students' achievement at the highest level. Difficulties in recruitment in science have led to less practical work and less rapid progress in science in Key Stage 3.
- The school has a clear idea of its strengths and areas for improvement. Systems for managing the performance of teachers are robust and there are clear links between the progress that students make and teachers' pay. Teachers and students use the school's new assessment system very effectively to understand what they need to do to improve. An effective component of this system is the very consistent use of marking and students' response to marking across all subjects and year groups.
- The school's commitment to equal opportunities and to tackling discrimination is evident in the support for disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs. The pupil premium funding is carefully targeted to achieve maximum effect, for example in small-group 'catch-up' sessions. Every teacher is aware of these students in their classroom and makes every effort to ensure that there are no barriers to their achievement. The very small number of students who attend provision off the school site achieve well, and school leaders check their progress, attendance and behaviour carefully. The school's arrangements for the safeguarding of these students and all students in their care are exemplary and exceed statutory requirements.
- Recent changes in sixth form leadership and management have led to rapid improvements in the current school year. While students still do not always have the study skills to get off to the best possible start when they enter the sixth form, they are now making good progress. The new system of mixed-age tutor groups allows sixth form students to make an exceptional contribution to the life of the school. They act as mentors and role models to younger students and learn to take on considerable responsibilities. There is effective and impartial careers and higher education advice for sixth form students and this process begins when students enter the school in Year 7.
- The school provides a curriculum that responds to the needs of its students. It is broad and balanced from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 5, offering some work-related courses in Key Stage 4 that are further developed in the sixth form. The school has responded to a noticeable lack of literacy skills in Year 7 by developing an effective programme of support using the allocated catch-up funding. Reading for pleasure is encouraged throughout the school: dedicated time for reading is given in tutor periods and students are urged to use the well-stocked library. The strengthening of numeracy skills across the curriculum is not as well developed.
- British values are thoughtfully promoted through many subjects and activities. For example, the school recently held its own mock general election. Tolerance and understanding of different faiths and cultures are actively promoted within the broad Catholic ethos of the school. The school celebrates the increasing diversity of its students through students sharing their faiths and cultures in assemblies and lessons. These values are closely linked in the school's curriculum to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to their emotional and physical well-being. Values such as mutual respect and tolerance, respect for the rule of law and understanding democracy are actively taught in lessons, assemblies and

school activities.

- The local authority has supported the school well in helping the governors to ensure effective challenge and support for the headteacher. It has helped the headteacher to seek out 'best practice' in other schools to strengthen leadership and teaching in the school, including working with a National Leader of Education from Ninestiles Academy.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective. Since the previous inspection, governors have checked their skills and taken part in extensive training to enable them to challenge the headteacher effectively and measure the performance of the school. They now understand data about students' progress and use the information to set targets for the school and to compare it to others nationally. Governors hold subject leaders to account for students' achievement and the quality of teaching in their subject areas in regular face-to-face interviews. As a result, governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching across the school.
- Governors manage the school's finances well and know how pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is spent and the impact of that expenditure in supporting students. They understand fully the arrangements for linking teachers' performance and pay and ensure targets are met before progression is granted up the pay scale.
- Governors are committed to the school's fair, caring and purposeful ethos: 'just and firm of purpose', as the school's motto suggests. This includes the active promotion of British values and the spiritual, moral social and cultural development of students.
- Three governors have specific responsibility for safeguarding, and they are meticulous in checking that procedures for child protection are secure. They bring expertise in this field from other aspects of their professional lives and are fully trained. As a result, the arrangements for safeguarding exceed the statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. In the school's previous inspection, the behaviour of students was judged as good and, since then, it has improved still further. There is an exceptionally strong climate for learning in the school.
- It is clear in lessons, in their books and in discussions that students relish a challenge. When offered the choice, the vast majority opt for the additional 'challenge task' in lessons. This is as a result of the high expectations that teachers have of their students. Students are willing to 'have a go' and demonstrate the ability to stick at a task when it presents them with difficulties.
- School records and discussion with staff and students, as well as parents' responses, all show that any low-level disruption in lessons is very rare and is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Staff and parents are overwhelmingly positive about behaviour and safety in the school. The conduct of students around school is impeccable. They take pride in their uniform, their school environment and their work, always arriving at lessons appropriately equipped. They are lively and enjoy being with their friends in school, but this never takes precedence over their learning or the respect they show their teachers and other adults.
- Students take the initiative in many aspects of school life, contributing to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, student-led assemblies are a common feature of school life, and students have written, edited, produced and sold their own high-quality school magazine. Students also run their own charity events, prompted by a call for help that they wish to answer.
- Attendance is above average for all groups of students and is carefully monitored. The rate of persistent absence is well below the national average. The school works closely with families to ensure that the most vulnerable students attend school regularly. Arrangements to support the few students studying off site are excellent. There are detailed arrangements with providers to check the safety and attendance of these students.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- There is a high uptake for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in which students learn to take responsibility for themselves and others. They make their own risk assessments, show initiative and resilience and learn always to put safety first. Sixth form students go on to take the Gold Award, which they have received at Buckingham Palace.
- Students feel safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe. Recent learning about cyber-bullying means that students now know what to do if they are being bullied online. A recent assembly on radicalisation prompted a student to comment, 'Now it's been pointed out to me, I would know they were trying to get me to do something wrong.' Students are also very knowledgeable about the need to protect their identity and other potential dangers of being on the internet.
- There have been no permanent exclusions of students from the school since the previous inspection, and the number of temporary exclusions has declined and is below the national average. This is in part due to the outstanding work of the school's student support centre, 'St Patrick's'. Staff work tirelessly in the outstandingly well-led St Patrick's centre to keep students in a learning environment while providing them with nurture and appropriate services. Case studies show that the school works very effectively with parents and external agencies to manage and improve the behaviour of students who have specific difficulties and to ensure the safety of vulnerable students.
- There is very little evidence of bullying of any kind in the school, and students are confident it would be dealt with quickly. The school has all the appropriate systems in place to detect it and to tackle it. Students are absolutely clear that they themselves will not tolerate hurtful or derogatory language about any groups of people and would not accept or endorse any extremist or discriminatory behaviour.
- Procedures are firmly in place for ensuring that all visitors are suitably checked and monitored. Students' behaviour is excellent and their safety is very well managed when they are off the school site.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The climate for learning in the school is extremely positive because teachers have established excellent working relationships with students. They know their students very well and plan lessons that match their needs and that their classes find interesting and varied.
- High expectations and improved quality of teaching have led to improved achievement for students throughout the school, including for the most able. Teachers use 'challenge tasks' and 'closing the gap' follow-up tasks to good effect in lessons, consolidating students' learning and ensuring mastery of key skills. Teachers' assessment of students' progress is regular and accurate, and their marking of students' work is consistent and detailed. This means that students are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- There have been a considerable number of changes in teaching staff since the previous inspection. Over half of the English department are new, for example, as well as having a new leader of English. Students now make good and much improved progress in English. The teaching of literacy across the school is very effective, and time is given to developing students' enjoyment of reading. Careful thought is given to the choice of texts for students, ensuring they are both appealing and challenging. The teaching of mathematics is also good, but teachers do not always seek out opportunities for students to practise their numeracy skills in other subjects.
- The school has a strong track record in the achievement of students in product design at GCSE and A level. Their final pieces are highly professional and show imaginative solutions to design challenges. A key aspect of students' success in the subject is the high quality of their written responses alongside their outstanding practical work. This balance of practical and written work is not always as successfully achieved in science in Key Stage 3 and, as a result, progress has been less strong than in other subjects.

- Appropriate levels of homework are set on a regular basis and are adapted to match students' needs. This individual study is often accompanied by group and pair work in lessons. Students' familiarity with working together leads to outstanding attitudes to learning, demonstrated in their highly effective communication and negotiation skills. In many subjects, teachers ask searching questions to ensure that students have developed a deep understanding of concepts and processes.
- Teachers are very clear about ensuring that there are no barriers to the learning of different groups of students, for example, disadvantaged students and those who have special educational needs. While additional support for these students is good, some less able students do not always receive the guidance and advice they need to make rapid progress.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good, and students are very positive about their lessons. Teachers show particularly good levels of subject knowledge in their sixth form teaching. Most teachers encourage students to take full responsibility for their own learning, urging them to work it out for themselves, before offering assistance. Not all teachers, however, ensure students start their sixth form studies with this combination of high expectations for initiative and clear and focused guidance.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The proportion of students leaving the school with at least five good passes at GCSE, including in English and mathematics, was above the national average in 2014. Students currently in Year 10 and Year 11 are on target to achieve considerably higher standards than those seen last year. This is as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching and students' highly positive attitudes to their learning.
- The proportion of students making expected progress in English and mathematics has increased since the previous inspection and was in line with national averages in 2014. Students currently at the school, in Key Stages 3 and 4, are making good progress, and many are making more than expected progress. The school has struggled to recruit permanent science teachers, and this has had some negative impact on progress in science in Key Stage 3. This has been resolved for the coming school year.
- The achievement of the increasing proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is good. They are making good progress and achieve standards broadly similar to other students. The small number of disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress and receive exceptionally strong support and guidance.
- The most able students make good progress, and this has improved since the previous inspection. In 2014, the proportion of the most able students making expected progress in English and mathematics was in line with the national average. Those currently at the school are on target to achieve increasingly higher standards. Some less able students are not always given the support to make as good progress as other students.
- The gap in attainment in Year 11 between disadvantaged students and others in the school narrowed from 2013 to 2014 in English from nearly a grade to just over half of a grade, and in mathematics from nearly a grade to nearly two thirds of a grade. The gap with other students nationally also narrowed from one grade to a quarter of a grade in English and from a half a grade to a quarter of a grade in mathematics. Disadvantaged students in the current Year 11 and throughout the school are making good progress and are on target for markedly higher attainment.
- Students in Year 7 who underachieved in English or mathematics in Key Stage 2 benefit from the extra support in reading, writing and mathematical skills the school has provided through the catch-up funding. As a result, many of these students are making improved progress and are catching up with other pupils in their reading and mathematics.
- Students currently in Years 7, 8 and 9 are making improved progress in all subject areas. The introduction in Key Stage 3 of a new form of assessment has encouraged deeper learning, with many more students showing increasing mastery of key skills in mathematics and English in particular.

- Achievement in the sixth form is good. While sixth form students do not always make rapid enough progress at the start of their sixth form career, by the end of Year 12 and Year 13 they attain standards in line with national averages. The progress of students currently in the sixth form shows strong improvement.
- School leaders demonstrate their continuing support for the most vulnerable students by using early entry to GCSE examinations for a very small number of these students who might otherwise not be able to sit the examination. The progress of the very small number of students who attend provision off the school site on a part-time or full-time basis is good and is closely monitored.

The sixth form provision is good

- Recent improvements under new sixth form leadership have led to improved progress for students since the previous inspection. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Students are overwhelmingly positive about their experience of being in the sixth form.
- Students in the sixth form are now making good progress. They achieve results across a wide range of subjects that are broadly in line with national averages. In addition, the gap is closing between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others in the sixth form. Some disadvantaged students are among the highest achievers.
- Students also make good progress on work-related courses, and the sixth form meets the government's minimum standards for both academic and work-related courses. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and students receive regular and precise feedback from teachers that helps them to make good progress in lessons. This includes good progress in additional English and mathematics lessons for those re-taking their GCSE qualifications.
- Attendance in the sixth form has improved and reflects the positive attitudes that students have towards their studies and the school. An increasing number of students stay on for the sixth form after Year 11, and very few leave at the end of Year 12. In 2014, every student at the end of Year 13 continued to higher education, employment or training.
- Students' destinations after sixth form are carefully tracked, and an increasing proportion go on to study at the most prestigious universities, including on courses in medicine and veterinary science.
- While students achieve well at the end of the sixth form, they do not always get off to a swift enough start in Year 12. This is because they are not always well enough prepared for studying without assistance and working on their own as well as developing their research and investigation skills.
- The school's system of mixed-age tutor groups provides opportunity for sixth form students to make an exceptional contribution to the life of the school. The behaviour of sixth form students, as role models and ambassadors, is outstanding. They want to stay on in the school sixth form because of the strong relationships and trust they have in their teachers. Sixth form students demonstrate and uphold the ethos of the school, wanting to give something back to their younger peers.
- The school's work to keep sixth form students safe and secure is outstanding. The carefully planned programme of personal, social and health education ensures that students know how to stay safe in their future social and working lives. Students are articulate and knowledgeable when discussing values that are a fundamental part of British society such as democracy and tolerance. They are aware of the dangers of all forms of radicalisation.

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	103541
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	462588

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
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	1152
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Mills
Headteacher	Glen Alexander
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2013
Telephone number	0121 706 4200
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