

St Mary's Catholic College, A Voluntary Academy

Address: Wallasey Village, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH45 3LN

Unique reference number (URN): 143554

Inspection report: 27 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders are determined that every pupil attends school every day. They have an accurate understanding of the barriers that prevent pupils from attending school regularly. They use these insights effectively to identify and address any issues. Attendance is improving, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Furthermore, pupils' punctuality to school has improved as a result of leaders' actions and high expectations.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct. Most teachers use the school system to deal with behaviour consistently well. Leaders have established clear routines that pupils understand and follow. The school is typically calm and orderly. Pupils who need additional support to behave well receive carefully considered guidance that helps them to meet the school's expectations.

Most pupils, as well as students in the sixth form, have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils say that behaviour has improved significantly. Pupils are respectful to staff and each other. They feel safe in school. Bullying is rare, and when it does occur, staff take swift action to address it. Pupils know that staff care for them.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that an ambitious, well-planned curriculum is in place. It sets out clearly what pupils should learn and when. Leaders ensure that they have an accurate understanding of how well teachers deliver the curriculum. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and are well supported by the development of a whole-school teaching approach. This is improving the consistency of teaching across the school and establishing high expectations. Typically, teachers deliver the curriculum well.

In most subjects, teachers check pupils' knowledge to identify gaps in their learning. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to revisit and retrieve prior knowledge, which helps to address missed or forgotten learning. On the whole, pupils remember what they have previously learned. However, on occasion, teachers' checks are not carried out as effectively as they could be. Some pupils' misconceptions are not addressed quickly enough.

Leaders ensure that staff receive the information they need to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of all pupils. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those with specific knowledge gaps in reading, writing and mathematics. Additional support sessions are put in place so that pupils at the early stages of reading get extra help to quickly gain the knowledge and skills needed to read well.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have ensured that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly and accurately. They work well with parents and

carers to ensure that the school has detailed information about pupils' needs. Staff are provided with information about pupils' needs and the strategies they can use to address any barriers to learning. Staff receive appropriate, regular training. They typically make well-thought-out adjustments to their teaching so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum well.

The school seeks timely advice from external agencies to ensure that pupils get the support they need. A range of well-considered, personalised strategies, such as writing and mathematics interventions, are helping pupils to catch up. Leaders regularly review these interventions to ensure that they are helping pupils effectively.

Leaders have carefully considered how best to support pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. For example, pupils receive additional support with reading when necessary. This helps to improve their reading knowledge and skills.

The school uses alternative provision well to meet the needs of a small number of pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils who attend such provisions receive a well-taught curriculum that meets their needs.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and those responsible for governance have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They carry out their statutory duties effectively. The trust challenges and supports leaders well and is taking effective action to improve important areas, such as pupil attendance and behaviour. They work in partnership with external professionals to build leadership capacity in the school, ensuring improvements are sustainable. Leaders at all levels are committed to ensuring that every pupil receives the best possible education.

Leaders use the pupil premium funding the school receives effectively in order to improve pupils' experiences at school. For example, these pupils benefit from work to encourage them to attend more regularly and enjoy school. Extra support for pupils' academic needs is beginning to have a positive impact, such as with reading.

Leaders at all levels are aware that pupils' achievement needs to improve. They are taking appropriate actions to address this. They are providing extra support for pupils undertaking public examinations and have adapted the curriculum to ensure that gaps in learning are addressed with more consistency. Staff receive regular, well-considered training that builds their expertise in delivering the curriculum. As a result, teachers are now implementing the curriculum more effectively.

Most staff are proud to work at the school. They feel valued by leaders. Staff recognise that leaders are mindful of their workload and wellbeing, and that they take these into account when making decisions.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a well-thought-out programme to support pupils' wider development. They have carefully thought about what essential knowledge, skills and experiences pupils,

including those who are disadvantaged, need to be well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils know how to stay safe online and in the community. They learn about healthy relationships and the dangers of substance misuse. Through 'Inspire' lessons, pupils learn and debate about important issues such as the holocaust, democracy and the dangers of substance abuse. They have opportunities to reflect on their beliefs and understand right from wrong. They develop their awareness of fundamental British values and equality. Enrichment experiences further enhance pupils' appreciation of cultural diversity and democracy. Pupils know to treat others with respect. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders ensure that pupils have many opportunities to develop their talents and interests. All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, can participate in these opportunities. An increasing number of pupils take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. This supports pupils to develop their character and resilience. Pupils are proud to take on leadership roles in school, and these help them learn how they can contribute positively to school life.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive the careers advice and guidance they need to make informed choices about their next steps. Students in the sixth form appreciate opportunities to learn about their future options. For example, participating in trips to universities and careers fairs. Students have the information they need to inform them about their career goals and aspirations.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that students in the sixth form have a curriculum that is ambitious and meets their needs. Typically, teachers deliver this curriculum well. They have secure subject knowledge and explain new learning as part of a clear sequence. Teachers make effective adaptations to learning, so that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities can access the curriculum and achieve well.

The work that current students produce shows that most are progressing well through the curriculum. While many students, in relation to their starting points, achieve well in public examinations, leaders acknowledge that not all students are fully prepared for their next steps.

The school ensures that students are well informed about the options available to them in the future. For example, they visit further education providers and attend careers events. Students have meaningful opportunities to engage with employers and undertake work experience.

The school offers students a range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills and learn about important issues that prepare them for adulthood. Furthermore, students benefit from a 'progress and aspiration' coach to support them with any personal issues. Students receive effective pastoral and academic support to address any barriers to learning that they may have.

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have barriers to their learning, do not achieve as well as they should in comparison to national expectations at the end of key stage 4. Leaders acknowledge and are addressing this. They remain ambitious for all pupils.

Most pupils currently in school are progressing well through the curriculum. Mostly, they produce work that shows a secure understanding of what they have learned. Gaps in knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics are prioritised and addressed swiftly. Pupils are starting to develop the knowledge and skills they need to access more complex learning.

Students in the sixth form typically produce work that shows a secure understanding of what they have learned. Most students achieve well from their starting points and are well prepared for their next steps in education.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils enjoy attending this caring and welcoming school. Positive relationships exist between staff and pupils. Staff mentors provide guidance and support, particularly for older pupils. Behaviour is improving. Pupils recognise these improvements. Most pupils are polite and respectful to each other and to the adults in school. Typically, pupils are developing positive attitudes to their learning. They behave well in lessons and at social times. Pupils are safe in school. They know there are many staff in school they can talk to if they have any worries. Pupils have no concerns about bullying. They acknowledge that if this did happen, staff would deal with it quickly.

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in public examinations. Improvements to the curriculum and teaching are starting to have a positive impact on pupils currently in the school. Staff are aware of the barriers to learning that many pupils who attend the school may face. Effective strategies to overcome these barriers are put in place. Most pupils feel well supported. They progress well through the curriculum from their starting points.

Pupils are proud to contribute to the life of the school. Some are on the student council, while others enjoy being student librarians and helping with community events. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities that an increasing number of pupils attend. For example, pupils enjoy attending drama and debate clubs, as well as a range of sporting clubs such as netball, football and rugby. Leaders have ensured that all pupils are able to access these activities.

Pupils' attendance and punctuality are starting to improve. They are now attending more regularly than previously, although leaders recognise there is still further work to do.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the checks used to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning are used consistently well across the school.
 - Leaders must ensure all pupils develop appropriate knowledge and skills across the curriculum so that they achieve as well as they should in national examinations.
 - Leaders should ensure that their actions to improve attendance are embedded and sustained so that attendance for all pupils continues to improve.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Andy Moor, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Brian O'Connell.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the CEO and other trust and school leaders and during the inspection. Inspectors spoke to those responsible for governance.

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.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The next section 48 inspection will take place in the next 5 years.

The school includes a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism. There are currently 29 pupils who attend this provision. All of them have an education, health and care plan.

The school makes use of 5 alternative provisions, including 4 that are unregistered.

Headteacher: Kevin Maddocks

Lead inspector:

Paul Halcro, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Scott Maclean, Ofsted Inspector

Marc Heron, Ofsted Inspector

John Cowper, Ofsted Inspector

Dawn Johnson, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 27 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,124

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,300

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

48.13%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

6.49%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

15.93%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	17.2%	45.2%	Below
2023/24 (final)	11.1%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	11.4%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	33.1	45.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.3	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	32.8	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.99	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.82	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	5.3%	25.6%	Below
2023/24 (final)	2.9%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	7.7%	25.2%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	23.1	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	23.7	34.6	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	28.7	35.0	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-1.28	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.06	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	5.3%	52.8%	-47.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	2.9%	53.1%	-50.2 pp
2022/23 (final)	7.7%	52.4%	-44.7 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	23.1	50.3	-27.2
2023/24 (final)	23.7	50.0	-26.3
2022/23 (final)	28.7	50.3	-21.6

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-1.28	0.16	-1.44
2022/23 (final)	-1.06	0.17	-1.22

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	86%	91%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	86%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	90%	94%	Below

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	22.56	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	25.11	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	21.63	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	-0.1	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.4	0.0	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	12.7%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	13.4%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	14.5%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	36.5%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	36.6%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	40.0%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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