

St Mary's Menston Catholic Voluntary Academy

Bradford Road, Ilkley, West Yorkshire, LS29 6AE

Inspection dates 25–26 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- St Mary's Menston Catholic Voluntary Academy is an outstanding provider of education. It prepares young people extremely well for their future careers regardless of individual background or personal aspiration.
- All groups of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make outstanding progress. They leave Year 11 with results that are very high compared to national averages.
- The sixth form is good. Students are happy and do well in their studies. However, rates of progress are not yet as high at A level as those seen at GCSE in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Students feel safe and are safe. They are happy, eloquent and very caring individuals who respect, and are respected by, their staff. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that their children are safe in the academy.
- Attendance levels at the academy are very high and improving further. Persistent absence rates are low and continuing to fall.
- Students' attitudes to learning are extremely positive. However, a few students do not demonstrate a pride in their work.
- There are many opportunities for teachers to develop their skills but sometimes expertise within the academy is not shared widely.
- Students' behaviour is impeccable. They are punctual, polite and respectful, dressed smartly and prepared for lessons.
- Teachers know their subjects well and use their knowledge to good effect.
- Marking is regular and helps students to make strong progress. However, occasionally, teachers do not fully follow the academy marking procedures.
- Procedures to monitor the quality of teaching are robust and secure.
- The monitoring of students' progress is focused and leading to good identification of groups of students so that their needs are well met.
- Leaders at all levels share a passion and vision for students of all ages to do their very best. Students respond well to this high aspiration.
- Governors and senior leaders set themselves high goals and reflect accurately on how their actions are affecting positively on the outcomes for students.
- Both the Academy Trust and Academy Governing Body challenge leaders well. They know their students and staff and ensure that the very best outcomes are achieved for most. They are challenging leaders to improve the sixth form further and to ensure that, although small in number, disadvantaged students do even better.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 44 lessons and part lessons, four of which were observed jointly with leaders from the academy.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a wide range of supporting documents and records, including those that relate to safeguarding and child protection, the leaders' views of the academy's performance, the monitoring of progress in lessons, the performance of teachers, achievement data and governing body minutes.
- Formal discussions were held with the headteacher, Chairs of both the Governing Body and Academy Trust, senior and middle leaders, four groups of students and the local authority. Additionally, informal discussions were held with students in corridors, in the yard at break time, at lunchtime and also after the academy day finished.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons, at break time, lunchtime and at the end of the day. They also considered the opinions of staff and parents towards behaviour of students.
- Inspectors also took the opportunity of observing general assemblies, reconciliation assemblies and a visit by a local police officer who was working with students during the inspection.
- Scrutiny of students' work was carried out during lesson observations in all subjects and additionally as a separate exercise to ascertain progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Inspectors listened to some Key Stage 3 students who participate in the reading support programme as part of the academy's approach to improve standards of literacy across all subject areas.
- Inspectors analysed 39 responses to staff questionnaires and 123 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Colin Scott, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional Inspector
Lynne Selkirk	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Jane Willis	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Menston Catholic Voluntary Academy converted to become an academy school in March 2013. When its predecessor school, St Mary's Catholic Comprehensive School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The highest proportion of students comes from a White British background. There is a small proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for extra support from the pupil premium funding is low compared to the national average. The pupil premium supports those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The academy has previously entered some students early for GCSE examinations but no longer does so.
- The academy is part of The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust.
- The academy also works in partnership with a non-denominational local secondary school in Guiseley to expand the curriculum on offer to its sixth form.
- The academy makes use of Leeds College for a very small number of students on a part-time basis for alternative additional provision.
- The academy supports initial teacher training opportunities through Schools Direct.
- The academy continues to receive some challenge and support from Leeds local authority.
- The headteacher is new to the academy since September 2014 and is led by a long-serving governing body supported through the multi-academy trust.
- The academy holds a number of awards including, the Healthy School Award, Artsmark Silver Award, Youth Sports Trust Gold Award, International Schools Award, Fairtrade School Award and Sainsbury's School Games Mark Gold Award.
- The proportion of disabled students or those with special educational needs is well-below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of progress in the sixth form so that attainment matches the high levels seen in Key Stages 3 and 4 so that even more students achieve the highest grades.
- Further strengthen approaches to marking and assessment and classroom practice so that all students are clear about how they are doing and specifically what they need to do to excel and so that students' pride in their work can be maintained through support for good presentation.
- Share the very best practices in the academy so that all teachers are able to develop their practice to ensure the highest standards across all subjects so that all students are able to respond to the highest challenges.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The relatively new headteacher, multi-academy trust and the established governing body and leadership team work harmoniously to ensure a shared vision and ethos of high expectations, care and support for students at all ages.
- Teachers are led well. The quality of teaching is strong throughout the academy overall. Leaders at all levels are responding well to the developing National Curriculum, tracking of students' progress and targeting of groups of students of different needs and abilities. This is leading to sustained high standards of attainment across all subjects.
- Parents and staff agree that the academy leaders manage and lead the academy well.
- The monitoring of the few students who attend alternative provision is good. They achieve as well as their peers in the academy and their attendance is also as good.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. The curriculum has recently expanded to enable students to broaden their horizons and participate in studies not available in the academy through a partnership with another local secondary provider. Leaders know the needs of the sixth form well in order to ensure students reach their full potential and have clear action plans in place to secure progress.
- The curriculum in the academy is fit for purpose. Leaders are keen to ensure that provision remains so and is currently reviewing the offer for students to keep them engaged, happy and prepared extremely well for the next steps in their careers or education.
- Guidance to young people for future careers and other guidance is strong. For example, they are introduced to the potential benefits of university education early in Key stage 3 and this is further followed by detailed support during option choices for GCSE studies to ensure students choose the right courses to enable them to access the careers of choice.
- The academy's own view of its performance is extremely accurate. Despite the high standards already being reached, particularly in GCSE examinations, leaders are astute in their identification of future needs and development opportunities. Key responsibilities are shared robustly and targets are clear.
- Leaders are accurate in their view of the quality of teaching. A strong programme of support to train middle leaders in the ability to judge teaching and progress is ensuring that staff are able to identify needs of students well.
- Similarly, support for those new to the profession is strong and there are opportunities for teachers to develop their expertise further. However, sometimes leaders do not always use internal expertise to share good practice amongst all teachers resulting in missed opportunities to improve teaching further and build on the high standards students can reach.
- Middle leaders are excited about their place in the academy. They are able to play a full and integral part in the leadership and direction of the academy and they respond to that responsibility well. They astutely know the needs of their teachers and students and are honest in their understanding of future developments.
- Teachers are only able to progress through the pay scales if they reach their given targets. Leaders and governors ensure that only those ready to progress do so. Additionally, governors and leaders have recently further challenged teachers in their progression by introducing an academy-wide strategy that will ensure students of different abilities will always be stretched and challenged to do their best.
- There are negligible gaps in the progress made and standards reached by most groups of students, particularly those with a special educational need or between the genders, due to the strong challenge and aspiration for all students to do well.
- Academy policies are robust, regularly updated and secure good support for students of all ages. For example, the equalities and discrimination policies, understood by staff, ensure that all students' needs are looked after regardless of their faith, background or sexuality.
- Despite already high rates of attendance, leaders have been extremely successful at continuing to increase attendance and reducing persistent absence. They monitor attendance robustly both at the start of the day and throughout lessons. The academy has not permanently excluded any students for the last three years and has a strong and inclusive policy to support learners who may find good behaviour difficult at times.
- Support for spiritual, moral, social and culturing understanding is very strong. The academy has a programme of reconciliation assemblies and other assemblies to support students' understanding of academy values. British values are supported well, for example, the rule of law and acceptance of others, through the academy's 'Stephen Lawrence Week' and visits by local police officers to talk about anti-social behaviour.

- There is a very low proportion of disadvantaged students at the academy. Until 2013, the rates of progress those students made compared to their peers in the academy were not as strong. However, in the last year, the gap between these few students and others has narrowed due to targeted intervention programmes. Despite this recent improvement and small numbers, the academy has already identified this as a continued need and committed to improving the progress disadvantaged students make, even further. There is a distinct commitment by leaders to ensure equality of opportunity for all, regardless of background, and the school has added additional funding from the academy budget in addition to government funds to ensure that gap is tackled. The spending of pupil premium funding is effective.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are led by a passionate chair who challenges leaders and governors well. The vice-chair of governors at the academy is also the chair of the Multi Academy Trust and this is ensuring that challenges remain high for all, including the academy's chair of governors.
 - Governors have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching and students' progress because of the good level of detailed communication given to them by academy leaders and their use of external evaluations of the academy's performance by the local authority.
 - The governing body ensures safeguarding requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and most staff believe that the behaviour of students is good. Inspectors observed students' behaviour across all areas and year groups of the academy both in and out of lessons and they agree with the view of staff and parents.
- Students are exemplary in their conduct and extremely respectful of others, both their peers and staff. They are smart, punctual, attend well and eager to learn.
- Attitudes to learning are highly productive. Students are keen to attend their lessons and ask searching questions of their teachers during instruction, demonstrating their genuine interest in their learning. The care and pride in their work that the majority of students take demonstrates how they value what they are learning. However, that care is not consistent across all students with some, particularly boys, allowing their work to be messy.
- Students aspire to do well due to the support of their teachers and aspirations they have. Many recent students have become famous in their chosen area of work, such as acting in Hollywood films, joining renowned British pop groups, and excelling in national sports or performance in national ballet groups. This exemplifies the nurture given to students over recent years to become whatever it is they want to become.
- Students' understanding of those of different cultures and faiths is strong. There are many opportunities for students to experience international visits and to work alongside those from different backgrounds. The empathy they show for others of different cultures, faiths, sexualities or background is admirable and they treat their peers equally. A typical student comment was, 'The academy has enabled many students to broaden their horizons.'

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- Child-protection procedures and other areas of safeguarding are robust, clear and unambiguous. Students say they feel safe. Parents and staff agree that students at the academy are looked after well. Procedures to check the credentials of staff are meticulous. Students know how to stay safe both in practical lessons and online when using with modern technologies.
- Bullying is rare and is tackled swiftly should it ever occur. Students are confident in reporting any problems and concerns they may have to staff, who in turn are knowledgeable about reporting procedures. Students have an excellent understanding of the different forms of bullying. Bullying logs indicate a small rise in recorded incidents but this is due to increased staff awareness of how to record such incidents on academy systems.
- The academy is extremely inclusive of students from all backgrounds. The support given to different groups is based solely on need and the principles of equality. For example, the academy has extremely strong support for students who may be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and there are case studies that demonstrate policy being put into practice. This helps students to feel particularly safe and valued in

this academy and further ensures British values are supported well.

- Although high levels of attendance and low levels of persistent absence are maintained compared to national averages, leaders are keen to improve this further. Systems in place ensure students' attendance, both in the academy and for the few who attend alternative provision, is monitored closely. In the last academic year, attendance rose further to reach 95.6%, despite many students being bussed in from a wide geographical area.
- The academy has not permanently excluded students for the last three years. Due to its inclusive policies and support for those who sometimes find good behaviour a struggle, students stay in the academy. Fixed-term exclusions are also well-below those seen nationally.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Typically, teaching over time is resulting in high levels of progress for all groups of learners and culminating in GCSE examination results that are amongst the highest found nationally.
- Teaching across Key Stages 3 and 4 is stronger than that seen in the sixth form. Teachers know their students well, have excellent subject knowledge and the lessons they deliver lead to rapid acquisition of knowledge by students and deep understanding.
- Teaching generally encourages good communication between students and staff. Students are keen to do well and ask their teachers searching questions. This helps students to deepen their understanding of the topics being covered.
- Challenge for students is good. Occasionally, marking and assessment is inconsistent between some teachers and the learning gains made by students varies as a result.
- Teachers use their marking to challenge students to think more deeply. This is not always the case for some and the academy marking and assessment policy is not always applied consistently. When this occurs, students do not always know exactly what they need to do to improve further. A few students, particularly boys, do not take enough care and pride in their work.
- The most able students are challenged to reach the highest possible grades at GCSE. Other students are equally challenged to do well. Occasionally, the progress students make over time is not always as good because they are not challenged to do their very best. The work set for them is sometimes too easy and teachers' marking does not indicate to students how to make rapid progress.
- Support in the classroom for the few students who have a special educational need is ensuring that they make equal progress to their peers.
- The teaching of literacy, reading and mathematics is strong throughout the academy. The few students who enter the academy with lower reading abilities, for example, are immediately supported to make good reading-age gains and do so effectively due to targeted interventions. Other such interventions are maintained in other year groups in Key Stages 3 and 4 to ensure students maintain their high rates of progress. This allows all students to access the full curriculum on offer throughout the academy and is enabling equality of opportunity for all.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- In 2013, the standards reached by students remained high with 85% of them attaining five or more good passes in their GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics. Results in the examinations of 2014 show that this figure reduced to 80%. This was due largely to substantial late changes to examination and course criteria for English.
- Current data and inspection evidence indicates that progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 continues to remain strong with intervention programmes for students in English and mathematics proving successful at supporting students to achieve the very best results.
- The rates of progress students make throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 are very high compared to national figures. For example, in 2013, 82% of students made expected progress and 43% exceeded expected progress in English. In mathematics, 88% made expected progress and 38% exceeded expected progress.
- Students with an identified special educational need make similar progress rates as their peers in the academy. There is negligible difference in the rates of progress made by girls and boys or other groups of students.
- In 2013, the gap in standards reached for disadvantaged students in receipt of the government's pupil premium funding remained wide at almost four grades lower than their peers in English and three grades lower for mathematics. Despite this, their rates of progress were similar to other students nationally and

these figures were skewed due to the very low numbers of disadvantaged students involved. In 2013, only three students caused a 15% difference in the academy figures for progress of this group. In 2014, examination results indicate that this gap in attainment has narrowed significantly and is now less than half a grade for English and under one grade for mathematics compared to their peers in the academy. Again, the numbers involved are small.

- The academy used to enter some students early for GCSE examinations. This is no longer the case and students remain on their studies until the end of the summer term in Year 11, ensuring that students' understanding of the subjects reach the highest possible levels in order to achieve the best results at GCSE.
- The most able students achieve high standards. The numbers attaining the highest grades are high compared to national figures for most subjects. For example, in 2013, the proportion of students who achieved an A* or A in GCSE examinations were double the national figure for English language, four times the national figure for core science and almost double in history.
- The very few students who attend off-site alternative provision make similar progress to their peers in the academy.
- Students in the sixth form make good overall progress but some of the most able are not reaching the higher grades that their prior attainment at GCSE would suggest. This is due, in part, to the historically less-rigorous tracking of those students compared to their younger peers.
- Intervention programmes across the academy such as that for Year 10 mathematics or Year 7 reading, are having a major impact on supporting students to reach the highest standards. For example, through the Year 7 reading programme, students have made substantial reading-age gains with the minimum gain being eight months and the average being 10 months in just a two-month period (according to academy data). Inspectors carried out a validation exercise on this data and concurred with the academy's view of progress.
- The academy prepares students extremely well for their future lives. Their literacy, communication and numeracy skills are well-developed and students are eloquent in their oracy.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students enter the sixth form with standards well-above average and leave with standards equally above average. Results at AS level for students overall in 2013 are not as high as expected given what their standards on entry are; however, this recovers by the time they reach A level and standards remain high overall.
- Leaders have historically not tracked the progress of students as rigorously in the sixth form as in Key Stages 3 and 4. Current progress tracking and inspection evidence indicates that the progress students make is now improving but this has not yet resulted in actual examination outcomes.
- Leadership of the sixth form is astute and accurately understands what needs to be done. Targets and measurable milestones are in place and leaders held to account by governors for the performance across the key stage.
- There are very few disadvantaged learners in the sixth form, meaning that any differences or gaps in achievement do not accurately reflect the position of progress and standards made overall.
- Students say that the guidance and curriculum opportunities they are given both when entering and throughout their time in sixth form is good. Due to a recent new partnership with another local secondary school, the sixth form has expanded so that students have a greater choice in their courses.
- The behaviour and role-modelling displayed by students in the sixth form is exemplary. Many are used to support, in a teaching capacity, younger students in academic intervention groups, bullying support and some also deliver assemblies to year groups. This helps build sixth-form students' confidence even further and gives them the experience of taking substantial responsibilities.
- There are now no students who are not in education, employment or training.

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	139351
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	448649

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,240
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Lavery
Headteacher	Darren Beardsley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01943 883000
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