

The Academy of St Francis of Assisi

Gardners Drive, Kensington, Liverpool, Merseyside L6 7UR

Inspection dates

11–12 December 2018 and 23 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is a vibrant multicultural community. Leaders have developed a culture in which all pupils are valued and supported to become thoughtful, considerate of others and hard-working.
- The trust shares leaders' values. The trust, the two dioceses and the local governing body work well with leaders to drive improvement across the school.
- Pupils benefit from high-quality teaching across a range of subjects. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning. They ensure that teaching caters effectively for pupils' wide-ranging needs.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching has improved in all subjects. However, pupils are not provided with routine opportunities to apply their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders personalise the curriculum to meet the needs of the diverse population.
- Pupils are immensely proud of their school. They value their education and the support that they receive from teachers. They demonstrate this through their very positive attitudes to learning.
- The quality of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is strong. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and understand the importance of British values.
- Attendance has improved steadily over the last three years. Attendance is now in line with historical national averages for all groups of pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who do not attend school regularly has reduced considerably. However, this is still slightly higher than the national average.
- The published outcomes for GCSE examinations are very low. However, all groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged and most able, are now making considerably stronger progress than in the past in this highly inclusive school.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. All staff work towards creating a safe and caring environment for all the pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon improvements to pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - pupils' attainment in external examinations continues to improve
 - teacher provide pupils with more regular opportunities to develop their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills
 - the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school continues to reduce so it is at least in line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Following the previous inspection of its predecessor, the school experienced a period of significant decline. This was characterised by a deterioration in pupils' behaviour and attendance, a marked reduction in the quality of teaching and a decline in pupils' progress and attainment.
- Leaders have brought about significant improvement in the last few years. They have ensured that improvements to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare have been matched by equally impressive developments within teaching. This has led to current pupils making significantly better progress across a range of subjects than has been the case in the past. However, this is not reflected in external published data. A legacy of underachievement and historical weaknesses in teaching have meant that pupils' achievement by the end of key stage 4 has not been good.
- Leaders' strong vision of 'no child left behind' is brought to life in this diverse community where all pupils feel welcome and able to achieve their goals. Leaders have created a culture in which all teachers work together to overcome pupils' barriers to learning.
- All staff are committed to the school's moral purpose. Leaders have created a multicultural and inclusive school in which every pupil really does matter. The school welcomes pupils who transfer from other schools, as well as pupils who have recently arrived in this country as asylum seekers. Many of these pupils join the school in key stage 4. Consequently, the usual suite of GCSE examinations for Year 11 pupils is not always appropriate. Leaders understand that alternative courses that are appropriate for these pupils will have a negative impact on the school's published performance data but are undeterred in their commitment to do what is right for each pupil.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. Teaching and learning have improved considerably over the last three years. Personalised professional development is used to support staff at all stages of their careers. Teachers work collaboratively to improve their classroom practice and reflect on how to improve further. In the small proportion of areas where teaching is not as strong, leaders tailor support to help teachers to improve.
- Subject leaders feel well supported. There are a number of new subject leaders who are provided with high-quality training to help them in their roles. All subject leaders know their departments well and are bringing about improvements in pupils' outcomes in their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders have high expectations of staff. They are aware of the pressures that the diverse intake of pupils can put on staff and they carefully consider teachers' workload when making decisions. Staff are very supportive of school leaders and enjoy working in the school. They are very proud of being members of staff at St Francis of Assisi.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is tailored to meet pupils' diverse needs. The formal curriculum is augmented by a vibrant range of extra-curricular opportunities that provide pupils with valuable opportunities for enrichment.

- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported in the 'small learning community' within the school. At key stage 3, these pupils are taught English and mathematics in this nurturing yet focused environment. For pupils who join in key stage 4, leaders design a personalised curriculum to meet individual needs, often in collaboration with parents and carers, to enable these pupils to progress to appropriate courses in further education.
- For those pupils who arrive at the school during key stage 4, the curriculum is adjusted to meet their needs. These pupils enter the school with very diverse learning experiences and starting points. Many have experienced disrupted schooling. Leaders ensure that appropriate careers guidance and support helps these pupils to consider aspirational goals for their futures. They are then set a personalised curriculum, which for some includes learning English as an additional language, to take them to that goal.
- Pupils' personal development is strong. All pupils benefit from a high-quality curriculum for PSHE and citizenship education, and teaching is particularly effective in these areas. The curriculum is enhanced by the diverse population, who share their experiences and cultural traditions during discussions. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Governors and trustees have worked with leaders to establish a clear vision for the school. Through a clear scheme of delegation, they work together effectively to bring the vision to life. They know the school well and understand where the strengths are and where it needs further improvement.
- Governors, under the agreement of the trustees, have a focus on performance and standards. The members of the governing body have a range of skills that enable them to do this effectively. Governors ensure that pupil premium funding is spent effectively. The external report on pupil premium funding has helped them to hold leaders to account for the use of this money.
- The school benefits from the support of the trust's directors. The trust has brokered support from external bodies to undertake reviews of governance, the use of pupil premium funding and the quality of the school's safeguarding provision. This external support has enabled leaders and those responsible for overseeing the school's work to develop an even-clearer view of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture of vigilance across the school. All safeguarding processes and systems are fit for purpose. Record-keeping is detailed and appropriate. Staff who lead on safeguarding follow up all concerns quickly and diligently. They have developed good relationships with outside agencies to ensure that pupils get the most appropriate help in a timely manner.

- All staff receive frequent training to ensure that they understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Staff know the signs of abuse and are diligent in ensuring that any concerns are swiftly reported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the appointment of the headteacher, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved considerably. Pupils benefit from good teaching across a range of subjects, but particularly in English, religious education, performing arts and vocational subjects.
- Teachers benefit from opportunities to plan the curriculum and pupils' learning with their colleagues. Leaders have established systems which ensure that teachers receive good support and undertake quality training to develop aspects of their practice that have been identified as needing development. This helps teachers to share good practice and has ensured that teachers play a pivotal role in helping each other to improve.
- Teachers develop strong relationships with their pupils, and pupils say that they value the help and support that their teachers give them. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning. Lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.
- Teachers question pupils purposefully. They use questioning to tease out pupils' understanding and help them to make connections with previous learning. Teachers create safe and positive learning environments where pupils can ask for help with their work. As a result, pupils confidently answer questions, contribute thoughtfully to discussions and feel confident to ask others for help when they get stuck in their learning.
- Teachers are increasingly ambitious in the way that they pitch new learning for all groups of pupils. Teachers have high expectations for the depth and complexity of pupils' learning. This is complemented with a consistent focus on helping pupils to overcome any personal barriers that may prevent them from accessing the demanding tasks that are set. This important sea change has been instrumental in enabling pupils to make stronger progress than in the past.
- Teachers use assessment effectively to understand how well pupils are learning and to provide them with work that is well matched to their individual needs. In some subjects, such as mathematics and science, teachers' thoughtful and rigorous use of assessment is playing a central role in developing teaching in these areas.
- The improvements that have been made to teaching are having a positive impact on the learning of all groups of pupils. In particular, the most able pupils are benefiting from teachers adopting a more systematic approach which is ensuring that these pupils are routinely challenged in their learning.
- The needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language are catered for expertly. Teachers focus consistently on the promotion of pupils' literacy skills. This benefits all pupils, but has a particularly significant impact on those pupils who are new to speaking English.

- The teaching of English has improved considerably in the last two years. Teachers of this subject have worked closely to ensure that their ambitions for pupils' learning are being met increasingly well through high-quality teaching of a curriculum that is thoughtfully sequenced.
- The teaching of mathematics has also improved. In this subject, teachers' use of questioning and assessment is helping pupils to consolidate and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Despite this, teachers sometimes expect pupils to spend too long completing mathematical calculations that they have already mastered. This is often at the expense of pupils engaging with more thought-provoking tasks that would enable them to develop their mathematical problem-solving and reasoning skills. In addition, the attitudes of girls towards mathematics are noticeably more varied than those of boys.
- Pupils are regularly set useful homework tasks that enable them to consolidate their learning, advance their thinking and develop the skills necessary to become effective, independent learners.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have developed a culture where pupils are at the heart of every decision. Pastoral care is strong. This is underpinned by a well-designed programme of PSHE and citizenship. The multicultural community enhances pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain. Pupils accept and welcome all those who join the school.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that teachers really care about them. One of the pupils who had transferred from another school said, 'You really are given a fresh start.' Pupils said that they feel safe and that there is always somebody to talk to if they have problems. They said that bullying was not a problem.
- Leaders provide high-quality careers education, information, advice and guidance for pupils. This is particularly important for those pupils who arrive at the school during key stage 4. This advice is used to help leaders design an appropriate personalised curriculum for these pupils. Careers advice is also used to raise the aspirations of pupils who have not succeeded in school in the past. All pupils who left the school last year advanced to appropriate further education.
- Leaders use alternative provision effectively to support the needs of pupils, some of whom arrive with behavioural or emotional issues. Leaders work closely with providers to ensure that these pupils are safe and making appropriate progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning mean that classrooms are very rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Social areas are lively and exciting places to be. Pupils enjoy talking to each other and to staff. They are very friendly and welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils' attendance has been rising steadily in recent years and is now in line with the national average. This is true for all groups of pupils. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is also reducing. However, this remains slightly higher than historical national averages.
- Leaders work particularly well with pupils who transfer from other schools. They use a variety of strategies to help these pupils to change their behaviours for the better. These pupils are welcomed into the school community by staff and pupils. They told inspectors that they were grateful for the opportunities that St Francis of Assisi gives them, and that they are determined to succeed.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The published GCSE outcomes show that the school has performed well-below national averages for both attainment and progress. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils, girls, pupils with SEND and those with middle and high prior attainment. Published information indicates that these pupils have made a worrying lack of progress during their time at the school across a range of subjects compared to others nationally.
- While the published data is concerning, it does not give the full story about the progress that recent pupils have made during their time in the school. In recent years, the school has had a very fluid population, particularly in key stage 4. This is because asylum seekers and pupils from transient families have joined the school. Many of these pupils made strong progress during their time at the school but this is not reflected in external progress data because most of these pupils did not sit national tests at the end of Year 6.
- Equally, a large number of pupils joined the school who had either been permanently excluded or were at risk of being permanently excluded from other schools. These pupils spent the majority of their secondary education in other schools. However, leaders can demonstrate that these pupils made strong progress during their time at the school and that all advanced to appropriate destinations.
- The 2018 GCSE results show that pupils who were in the school for both key stage 3 and key stage 4, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, made good progress. Despite this, historical outcomes have not been good due to low overall attainment and weaknesses in the progress of groups such as girls and those of middle and high prior attainment. Added to this, pupils' outcomes in English, mathematics and science indicated that they had not made good progress during their time at the school in these subjects. These limitations were, in part, the legacy of weaknesses in teaching in the past.
- Although low, pupils' attainment in the 2018 GCSE examinations indicated improvement. For example, the proportion of pupils attaining standard and high passes in the majority of subjects increased. Furthermore, the proportions of pupils attaining standard or high passes in both English and mathematics improved noticeably. The

performance of pupils currently in Year 11 in recent mock examinations indicates that their attainment is already above that of their predecessors by the end of Year 11. Pupils' attainment is therefore showing strong and consistent signs of improvement.

- Current pupils are making significantly better progress due to the improvements that have been made to teaching. These improvements are uniform across the curriculum, with pupils making stronger progress in all subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- Evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' work, supported by leaders' information about the achievement of current pupils, indicates that all groups of pupils are making better progress than in the past. Disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, girls and those with middle and high prior attainment are now performing well across the curriculum. Furthermore, the unusually large number of children who are looked after are also making strong progress as a result of the close attention that is paid to these pupils' needs.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language have made excellent progress in the past and continue to do so. Where appropriate, these pupils have extra literacy support to help them develop their English language skills. This then enables them to access the whole curriculum and underpins the very strong progress that they make in a range of subjects. Pupils' books show that, by Year 11, the work that these pupils complete compares favourably with that of other pupils in the school.
- Leaders have made the teaching of literacy a high priority for some time. Leadership in this area is very effective and pupils who have poor literacy skills quickly start to catch up with their peers.
- Leaders' emphasis on providing strong teaching and a curriculum suited to the needs of individuals ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. In 2018, all pupils progressed to further education and embarked upon courses that are well matched to their aspirations and aptitudes.

School details

Unique reference number	144493
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10053585

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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	836
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Peter Alcock
Headteacher	Tracey Greenough
Telephone number	0151 2607600
Website	http://asfaonline.org/
Email address	info@asfaonline.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than the national average.
- A large number of pupils join the school at times other than the start of an academic year of key stage. Many of these pupils are new to the country. Others join the school following permanent exclusion or to prevent permanent exclusion from another school.
- The school uses a number of alternative providers: Harmonize Academy, Everton Free School, Progress Schools Toxteth, Peregrinate Limited, Assess Education, Prudentia Education, NexGen Academy, North Liverpool Award Centre, IMPACT, Aspire Centre, and Sandfield Park School.

- The school is a member of the All Saints Trust. The trustees are responsible for the core governance functions of setting the school's direction, holding the headteacher to account and ensuring financial probity. The scheme of delegation sets out clearly which powers have been delegated to the local governing body and executive officers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects, including joint observations with school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work from all year groups and across a range of subjects alongside school leaders.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors spoke with a group of curriculum leaders and a group of teachers.
- Inspectors met formally with four groups of pupils from Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally during social times.
- An inspector spoke with three members of the local governing body, including the chair. An inspector also spoke with the chair of the trust board, a representative of the diocese and the chief executive officer of the school.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including school policies, safeguarding procedures, the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the 41 responses to the pupil survey, the 53 responses to the online staff questionnaire, 69 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the one written response from parents.
- Five inspectors visited the school on 11 December. Three of these inspectors also visited the school on 12 December. This was followed up by a further visit from two of Her Majesty's Inspectors on 23 January to gather additional evidence.

Inspection team

Erica Sharman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alison Stott	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Annette Patterson	Ofsted Inspector
Will Smith	Her Majesty's Inspector
Anne Seneviratne	Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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