

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Damian's RC Science College

Lees Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire OL6 8BH

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 June 2023

Outcome

St Damian's RC Science College continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attending St Damian's Roman Catholic Science College thrive in school. They whole-heartedly embrace the 'St Damian's way' of learning. For instance, pupils forge positive relationships through living out the value of mutual respect.

Leaders have fostered a vibrant and academically stimulating environment for pupils. They maintain exceedingly high expectations for pupils' behaviour and achievement. Pupils respond well to these expectations. They behave exceptionally well, work hard and achieve highly. Pupils place a high value on their education.

Leaders have a strong commitment to promoting personal development beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils benefit from a vast array of activities, clubs, assemblies and leadership roles. For instance, the 'growing in faith together' team have spent time fundraising for the homeless and the elderly. This has helped pupils to understand the importance of teamwork, empathy and kindness. The pupil language leaders enjoy promoting the love of languages. For example, they plan and deliver Spanish workshops to primary school pupils. Pupils are respectful of each other. They take genuine pride in helping others.

Any incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively by leaders. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), feel honoured, safe and happy to be attending this school.

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

Leaders have designed an exceptionally ambitious curriculum. Most pupils in key stage 4 complete the full suite of the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is rich and varied. Pupils achieve extremely well across a wide range of subjects. They are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders have created a culture of continuous improvement where the curriculum is regularly reviewed and refined. Leaders communicate clearly what subject content should be taught and when this learning should take place. Teachers have strong subject knowledge which assists them in designing meaningful learning activities that help pupils to acquire a rich and secure body of knowledge over time. For instance, teachers ensure that prior learning is revisited systematically to help pupils build and secure new learning.

Teachers use a range of assessment strategies to ensure that pupils' learning is continually checked. Teachers make sure that they do not let misconceptions go unchecked. Pupils are empowered to take ownership of their own learning. They do so with zeal and maturity.

Reading has a high profile in school and across the curriculum. There is a well-stocked 'literacy hub' that promotes reading for pleasure. For example, pupils avidly read newspapers and other texts in the hub during their breaktimes. Well-structured literacy programmes are delivered effectively during form time. This encourages pupils to become highly competent readers and writers. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read are identified quickly and supported very effectively by expert staff. Pupils successfully overcome gaps in their reading knowledge so that they can access the curriculum fully.

Effective systems are in place to identify needs of pupils with SEND quickly. Leaders place a strong focus on addressing any barriers that may stop these pupils being successful learners. Teachers adeptly tailor their delivery of the curriculum so that pupils with SEND are very well supported. They achieve exceptionally well. Pupils with SEND are fully integrated into the school life. They actively acquire leadership positions and participate in a variety of clubs.

Lessons are an oasis of calm and purposeful learning. Pupils are grateful for the encouragement and support that the teachers provide to help them excel. Pupils are committed and motivated to do well. Lessons are rarely disrupted, which means pupils can build on their learning securely without distractions.

Pupils' personal development is promoted exceedingly well. Pupils are taught to appreciate and value diversity. Consequently, they relish opportunities to learn about other religions and cultures. For example, pupils undertake projects with different schools to help them build relationships with wider communities. Leaders support pupils to take part in and win national competitions, such as the Spirited Art and Poetry Competition. They have also achieved a plethora of accolades such as the Excellence in Pupil Development Award, the Tameside School Inspire Award and the Inclusion Quality Mark. Such achievements indicate leaders' proven success in ensuring that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive high-quality information and impartial advice and guidance about careers. This includes inviting local employers, colleges, universities and apprenticeship providers during careers week. Pupils are well informed of the world of work. Year 10 pupils take part in a range of work experience placements. Almost all pupils successfully enter education, employment or training when they leave school.

Governors are immersed in school life. They are well organised and operate with a clear sense of purpose. Governors have a deep understanding of the school and provide expert challenge and support to leaders. There is a collaborative and positive working environment which contributes positively to staff's well-being and the management of their workload. By ensuring that staff feel valued, empowered and supported, leaders are able to provide high-quality education and excellent outcomes for students.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff adhere to a robust and comprehensive safeguarding policy. They train staff and share a regular safeguarding bulletin, so that staff are kept up to date with the latest safeguarding procedures. Staff know about, and effectively use, the strong reporting and recording procedures to support pupils at risk of harm.

The school maintains a close relationship with a range of external agencies. This means that pupils at risk of harm and their families receive appropriate and timely support.

Pupils have an extensive understanding of how to keep safe. This includes how to keep safe online and in water, and how to avoid unhealthy relationships. Leaders deliver regular safeguarding assemblies, which helps pupils to stay alert to risks such as knife crime and sexual harassment. Pupils' positive relationships with staff mean that they feel comfortable to report any concerns to adults in school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in November 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	106270
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10289906
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	842
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Loretta Dean
Headteacher	Sheldon Logue
Website	www.stdamians.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 and 16 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Roman Catholic school in the Diocese of Salford. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2016.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the senior leader and subject leaders. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff and leaders during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to representatives of the governing body, as well as a representative of the local authority and the diocese. Inspectors also spoke to the school improvement partner.

- Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed behaviour during social times and during movement in school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders and teachers, visited a sample of lessons, reviewed samples of pupils' work and spoke with some pupils, including those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils.
- The inspection team analysed safeguarding documentation, including the single central record. Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils, staff and leaders to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for personal development, behaviour, attendance and reading. Leaders also met with the school's SEND coordinator and pupil support officers.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation and attendance and behaviour records, governors' minutes and enrichment records.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Amina Modan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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