

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Saint Ambrose College

Hale Road, Hale Barns, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 0HE

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 January 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is Dermot Rainey. Saint Ambrose College is the sole academy in the Saint Ambrose College Edmund Rice Academy Trust which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter Goodwin.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff at Saint Ambrose College have the highest expectations for what pupils, and students in the sixth form, can achieve. Pupils relish the broad and ambitious curriculum that the school provides. They benefit from high-quality teaching. They achieve exceptionally well. As a result, they are ready to move on to a wide range of aspirational next steps in education, employment or training.

Pupils are proud to be an 'Ambrosian'. They understand their responsibility to contribute to the highly positive culture of behaviour at the school. They do this impeccably. Pupils demonstrate exceptionally high levels of respect, consideration and courtesy to others. Pupils and staff enjoy warm and productive relationships.

Pupils love coming to school. They feel extremely well looked-after and safe. The calm and caring environment makes them eager to attend each day.

Pupils help staff to shape and deliver the wider opportunities that they can participate in. They regularly participate in an extensive range of activities that develop their academic, sporting, creative and performance skills. For example, some pupils value what they learn about co-operation and healthy competition in reaching national sports finals. More widely, other pupils appreciate the opportunities to get together with friends to learn more about their interests, develop their talents and do good deeds for others.

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

Governors, leaders at all levels and staff have worked in harmony to reach their shared aspirations. They have ensured that pupils, and students in the sixth form, benefit from an extremely high-quality education, a highly positive culture of behaviour and extensive opportunities to develop their wider values, attributes and talents.

Leaders and staff model the highest standards of mutual respect and consideration. They work together in an extremely supportive environment. Leaders diligently engage with staff. They ensure that policy and practice effectively support the workload and well-being of staff.

The school ensures that pupils, and students in the sixth form, study an extensive range of subjects. Subject curriculums carefully focus on the knowledge and skills that enable pupils to achieve exceptionally well. They are ready to tackle the next stage of their education with confidence.

Pupils' rates of attendance are high. They are hungry to learn and get the most out of their lessons. The behaviour and conduct of pupils and students in lessons is exemplary.

Staff are experts in their subjects. They skilfully provide pupils with carefully crafted opportunities to acquire new knowledge in lessons and when working independently. Pupils develop resilience and highly effective study habits. Staff expertly explain important concepts. They use skilfully designed activities so that pupils apply their knowledge to increasingly challenging tasks.

Staff make skilful use of assessment strategies during lessons and at the end of units of work. Consequently, pupils receive focused feedback about what knowledge they have learned. Furthermore, they are expertly guided about how well they have used or applied this knowledge in their work.

The school carefully considers a broad range of information to accurately identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff carefully consider and address the barriers that pupils with SEND encounter as they learn. In doing so, staff ensure that pupils get highly effective and timely support. As a result, pupils with SEND access the curriculum and learn in lessons as well as their peers.

The school promotes the development of pupils' reading and other literacy skills. A small number of pupils get the tailored support that they need to bring their reading knowledge to the same high standard as others. More widely, all pupils benefit from well-matched opportunities to refine and enhance their reading, oracy and writing skills. Consequently, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, are highly equipped to make incredibly strong progress across the curriculum.

Pupils and students benefit from a carefully thought through programme that promotes their personal and social development. They gain a deep appreciation of how to stay healthy, to manage finances and to become a positive member of society. This

programme is expertly delivered by suitably trained specialist staff. Through this programme, staff ensure that pupils gain the knowledge that they need to stay safe. Pupils are supported to explore and discuss age-appropriate topics and consider the world from different viewpoints. Consequently, pupils are confidently prepared for the responsibilities and opportunities that they may face in their lives.

The governing body has the expertise to undertake its role exceptionally well. Members of the governing body ensure they have detailed insight into the school's work. Governors provide a skilful balance of support and challenge to the school. They make a tangible contribution to the school's ambitious vision and caring culture.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 good for overall effectiveness in February 2020.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138134
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10366750
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1091
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	280
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Goodwin
Principal	Dermot Rainey
Website	www.st-ambrosecollege.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Saint Ambrose College is the sole academy in the Saint Ambrose College Edmund Rice Academy Trust.
- Saint Ambrose College is a voluntary-aided faith school. It is part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in December 2021.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the board of trustees, local authority and the Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- Inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils who have additional needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses of the pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the comments received through the free-text facility.

Inspection team

Michael Pennington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Burke-Jackson

Ofsted Inspector

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