

St Mary's Catholic High School

Address: Woburn Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR9 2EE

Unique reference number (URN): 101814

Inspection report: 13 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 make attendance a key priority. They ensure that pupils, staff and parents recognise the importance of regular attendance at school. Pupils know that high attendance can increase their achievement, access to wider experiences and their safety and wellbeing. Pupils' attendance is high over time. This includes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. The school takes swift and effective action to reduce barriers to attendance and to encourage pupils to attend regularly.

Pupils' behaviour is positive. They demonstrate respectful attitudes towards one another and members of staff. Any bullying or harsh language is dealt with quickly. Pupils are typically quick to settle in classrooms. They focus well on their learning. They move around the buildings sensibly between lessons. Teachers are clear and consistent about their expectations of pupils' conduct. Pupils follow teachers' requests promptly and courteously. The school supports pupils to develop self-discipline where needed. This means pupils can get the very most from their time at school and be as well prepared as possible for their futures.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have created an inclusive climate in which staff take care to understand and help pupils. Pupils also support one another.

Pupils' needs are identified quickly and expertly when they join the school. Leaders work closely with external professionals. This work provides staff with accurate information about special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have designed systems to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. However, on occasion the adaptations teachers make in the classroom are not successful. This means at times pupils with SEND do not access the curriculum as well as their peers. Leaders have recognised and begun to address this. However, this work is new. It is too early to see some of the impact.

Pupils face a range of barriers to their learning and wellbeing. For example, very large numbers of pupils arrive at the school at different times. Many speak no English. Some are unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Leaders are acutely aware of the needs of each pupil. They ensure that staff know how to encourage and support pupils to feel safe and secure at school. They make effective use of additional funding such as the pupil premium funding. This ensures that pupils have the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.

Leaders' work to identify any barriers to attending school and accessing the school's wider offer is particularly effective. The school gives pupils and their families the additional support they need. For example, it helps with managing the journey to school or ensuring pupils have the right equipment and resources.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leadership and governance makes a real difference to staff and pupils at this school. Leaders have a deep understanding of their school. They have well-developed expertise and are ambitious for pupils. Leaders know well the barriers that many pupils face when they arrive. They design systems that help to reduce barriers and ensure that pupils develop a sense of belonging and success here.

Leaders provide staff with support and development opportunities. These increase their expertise in the subjects they teach. They ensure that staff can manage their workload and any pressures they may experience. Staff are proud and positive about being part of the school community. Leaders are considerate of their wellbeing.

Leaders have judiciously chosen priorities for the school's work. They have taken decisive action to ensure that pupils attend regularly, behave well and have enriching wider experiences. Above all, leaders prioritise keeping pupils safe, and teaching them about how to keep themselves safe. The impact of leaders' work is clear to see in these areas. Where aspects of the school's work needs attention to improve, leaders have themselves identified a clear course of action to bring about higher standards. In all cases, this work is underway, but it is too early to see the impact of new approaches.

Governors make a substantial contribution to the leadership of the school. They have expertise, know the school well and strike a helpful balance between challenging leaders and offering the school support. This helps the school to keep improving over time.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal development programme purposefully broadens pupils' knowledge of the world and themselves. This includes for disadvantaged pupils and those with vulnerabilities. It extends their experiences. For example, residential trips in Year 7 and 11 allow pupils to form friendships and support each other at key transition points. Pupils regularly take up enriching opportunities, such as clubs for football, choir and crochet.

Pupils develop secure knowledge about how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. For instance, they know the importance of planning opportunities for rest and relaxation during busy or stressful times in life. This helps pupils to look after themselves and to anticipate when they may need extra support. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to remain safe, online and offline. Leaders ask pupils what they need to know more about. Leaders use this to ensure that curriculum content is relevant. For instance, pupils learn much about risks around local transport hubs. This is because so many routinely use them as part of their journey to and from school. Pupils benefit from guidance about careers. This includes support to choose a destination and make their application. Pupils enjoy regular encounters with employers, colleges and universities.

Leaders place strong emphasis on cooperation and the value of belonging to a community. They provide responsive and caring pastoral support. This helps pupils feel well known and cared for at school. Staff encourage pupils' appreciation of other people's views while reflecting on their own beliefs. Pupils do this very well. They reflect carefully on ethical issues and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils practise democratic

processes when they present a 'manifesto' and their campaigns to be elected into pupil leadership roles. Most older pupils take up a role. They take their positions as role models for younger pupils seriously. This makes an important contribution to the development of pupils' character.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

There are inconsistencies in how well pupils achieve, particularly in written and spoken communication. Pupils do not learn well enough how to write accurately, or how to articulate their understanding, ideas and thoughts. This limits their opportunities to communicate well. Additionally, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not learn the curriculum content as securely as leaders intend. These pupils have gaps in their knowledge and in their work. These make it more difficult to build confident understanding of curriculum content over time. In these important areas, pupils are not sufficiently well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training.

Pupils' knowledge develops well in many other areas of the curriculum. Published outcomes in national tests do not represent all of the gains pupils make. The school has much higher-than-average proportions of pupils who join the school later than Year 7 or who are new to learning English. In many instances, their starting points are lower than their peers. Over time, most groups of pupils progress well through the curriculum. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Pupils' written and spoken communication is not consistently well supported across the curriculum. They do not build knowledge well enough about basic writing skills, such as handwriting and spelling. The school tries to address this through optional additional support. However, too many pupils who need this do not access it. Therefore, gaps in pupils' knowledge in these areas persist. Leaders identify pupils who have not secured strong foundations in mathematics. Teachers support pupils' reading suitably. Leaders provide any extra help pupils may need to read fluently and accurately.

At times, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are asked to complete tasks independently which they need more support to understand. When this occurs, pupils do not learn what teachers intend. Leaders provide suitable information about pupils' needs so that teachers have guidance on how to meet them.

Leaders have designed a suitably ambitious curriculum. Pupils learn the curriculum content in a sensible order that helps them to build on what they have learned previously. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. Across the curriculum, key vocabulary is identified. Teachers promote this vocabulary with pupils and help them to understand what it means.

Pupils new to the school are supported to join in with lessons and quickly get up to speed with the curriculum. Teachers provide helpful support for pupils at the early stages of

learning to speak English. Those pupils understand what is expected of them and can join in with learning well.

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

This is a deeply caring school in which pupils treat one another, and staff, with great courtesy, respect and consideration.

Many pupils join this school at non-standard transition points. Staff take great care to understand each pupil's individual circumstances. Staff help them feel secure and at ease in the school environment. For example, staff provide well-tailored support for pupils to develop their grasp of English where they may be new to speaking the language. Pupils appreciate the help teachers provide with learning. Pupils develop new knowledge in a range of subjects. However, the support for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to learn the curriculum is not consistently effective. Some pupils with SEND have persisting gaps in their knowledge as a result. Likewise, some pupils do not receive additional support to address vital gaps in their knowledge, particularly in their written and spoken communication.

Pupils make an important contribution to the school's welcoming climate. They help pupils who have recently joined the school to find their way around and to access any needed support. Pupils lead on community initiatives. These include school culture celebrations, sporting competitions and charitable fundraising. This increases pupils' sense of belonging to the school community. It also develops their character and empathy.

Bullying is extremely rare within the school. The vigilant culture ensures that the school is a safe place for pupils.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Classrooms are calm. Pupils concentrate well on their studies. They enjoy learning a broad and ambitious curriculum. The school provides guidance to pupils that helps them to identify ambitious future destinations. This further strengthens their motivation to work hard.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that successful adaptations to teaching and resources are consistently made so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities develop their knowledge and achieve well over time.
 - Leaders should improve how the curriculum and the school's academic support develops pupils' foundations in key aspects of learning, particularly the accuracy and fluency of their written and spoken communication.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Bernard Tomkins.

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The school's most recent Section 48 inspection for schools with a religious character took place in December 2021.

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 pupils, leaders and staff, members of the governing body, the local authority and the diocese during the inspection.

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 school makes use of two registered alternative provisions.

The school is registered to provide post-16 education. However, there are no students currently on the school's roll in this age range.

Headteacher : Conal Patrick Shields

Lead inspector:

Rebecca Iles-Smith, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Nigel Clemens, Ofsted Inspector

Lucy Bruce, Ofsted Inspector

Sophie Cavanagh, 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 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

564

Well below 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

1,115

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: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

41.67%

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

2.48%

Close to 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

10.99%

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)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (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)	22.9%	45.2%	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.9%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	29.7%	45.3%	Below

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)	36.5	45.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	39.8	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	38.6	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)	0.29	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.00	-0.03	Close to average

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)	17.4%	25.6%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	35.6%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	30.0%	25.2%	Close to average

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)	33.8	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	41.3	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	37.5	35.0	Close to average

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)	0.39	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.34	-0.57	Close to average

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)	17.4%	52.8%	-35.4 pp
2023/24 (final)	35.6%	53.1%	-17.6 pp
2022/23 (final)	30.0%	52.4%	-22.4 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)	33.8	50.3	-16.5
2023/24 (final)	41.3	50.0	-8.7
2022/23 (final)	37.5	50.3	-12.8

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)	0.39	0.16	0.23
2022/23 (final)	-0.34	0.17	-0.50

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)	90%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	92%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	92%	94%	Average

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)	5.7%	8.1%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.1%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	7.6%	9.0%	Below

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)	17.9%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	19.7%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	23.7%	26.5%	Close to average

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.

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