



Saint Ambrose College

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

Unique reference number (URN): 138134

Inspection report: 25 November 2025

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.

Exceptional ●

Achievement

Exceptional ●

Pupils are highly motivated to learn and, as a result, make incredible progress through the curriculum. The quality of work that pupils produce demonstrates profoundly the extremely high achievement at the school. Published data shows that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils consistently make better progress and attain significantly above national averages. These pupils have a truly transformational experience at this school.

Leaders' vision to equip pupils with the knowledge they need to succeed is fully realised. The vast majority of pupils move into education, employment and training opportunities with impressive future prospects.

Leaders have achieved this exceptionality through the values, ethos and the high expectations that they have established in the school. Their focus on nurturing well-rounded young people has led them to systematically and forensically removing barriers to learning and wellbeing so that pupils thrive. Most pupils achieve outcomes in examinations that are rarely matched nationally.

Personal development and wellbeing

Exceptional ●

The personal development programme has been expertly designed to ensure that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, can develop morally, socially, spiritually and culturally. Pupils speak confidently about complex ethical and societal issues and link these to the importance of fundamental British values. This programme carefully interweaves personal, social, health and economic education lessons with form time discussions, assemblies, guest speakers and visits to build an exemplary rounded personal development offer.

The school's relationships, sex and health education ensures that pupils have a deep understanding of healthy relationships. They know how to keep themselves mentally healthy and how to support others' mental health. They understand the risks to their wellbeing associated with extended screen time as well as offline risks. Pupils receive excellent pastoral support.

All pupils participate in a wealth of lunchtime enrichment activities. Many of these clubs and societies are run by the pupils. These activities develop their talents and interests as well as their leadership and interpersonal skills.

Pupils celebrate equality and diversity during 'inclusivity week' and daily through showing respect and care to those who might be different to themselves. The school's ethos develops pupils' character to such an extent that it compels them to go out of their way to understand difference and show empathy to others.

The palpable school culture of compassion for those that are marginalised empowers pupils to reach out to more deprived communities locally and internationally. This work often has a transformational effect on the pupils in the school and those they serve.

Pupils across the school receive a carefully considered careers curriculum that prepares them to make decisions about their next steps. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, move on to sustained destinations at the end of Year 11. Students in the post-16 provision, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress on to study at prestigious universities.

Pupils are extremely wellprepared to take their place as confident and responsible citizens in Britain's modern and diverse society.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils' attendance is prioritised by leaders. As a result, pupils' rates of attendance are very high. The school's warm welcome and acceptance of everyone means that pupils are willing to travel significant distances in order to attend. Leaders identify any barriers to pupils' attendance rates and work closely with families to reduce these successfully. They have prioritised pupils who find it difficult to attend due to health reasons. They use many different ways to involve these pupils in the life of the school.

Pupils demonstrate positive and respectful attitudes in lessons. There are warm and respectful relationships between pupils and staff. Teachers are clear about what they expect from pupils in terms of their behaviour. Staff follow the school's policies and procedures fairly and consistently, when dealing with any misbehaviour. Pupils show great care for each other in lessons and during social times. They have a great deal of patience with each other on the playground and show grace when things go wrong. Older pupils and post-16 students model the high standards of behaviour expected by leaders and staff. They take responsibility to teach younger pupils about how they should conduct themselves. Pupils say that the school community teaches them to value each other. Parents and carers are very positive about the standards of behaviour at the school.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

The highly ambitious curriculum has been appropriately sequenced so that pupils can deepen their understanding of concepts and link new knowledge to what they have learned before. In all subjects, pupils' work shows that they build successfully on earlier learning.

The curriculum is delivered expertly by staff. Teachers use their deep subject knowledge to provide clear explanations for pupils. Activities in lessons are deliberately designed to ensure that all pupils are successful in their learning.

Teachers know pupils very well. They use the detailed information that they have about each pupil to adapt their teaching so that pupils overcome barriers to their learning.

Leaders have guided staff expertly to reach highly effective and consistent approaches to teaching. Leaders monitor the impact of curriculum delivery effectively and accurately. This leads to an insightful understanding of where further improvement may be needed.

Leaders make sure that pupils who find reading challenging receive close support so that they catch up quickly. Teachers adapt their choice of texts with precision to meet the needs of these pupils. Teachers develop pupils' literacy skills very well. Pupils become experts at synthesizing text and writing notes using well-developed study skills. They use these skills to continually develop their ability to learn independently.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have ensured that staff know and understand the barriers to learning that pupils may face. Pupils' individual needs are very well understood. The identification of pupils' needs begins with extensive support before they transition into the school. Leaders and staff work closely with parents and carers when a pupil's needs change or if there is the need for an assessment to identify any additional needs.

Teachers are given the information that they need to support all vulnerable pupils effectively. Those pupils who find learning difficult and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from high quality, inclusive teaching. Leaders effectively monitor pupils' progress and assess the impact of the support that pupils receive. Any pupil identified as being behind in their learning is assigned a mentor, who helps them to catch up rapidly.

Leaders ensure that specialist advice and support are sought as appropriate. For example, they work with leaders from another school with expertise in autism to ensure that staff are well trained and expertly prepared to teach pupils with autism.

The pupil premium funding, and other funding, is used to provide exciting and challenging opportunities for different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. For example, raising pupils' aspirations by working with leading universities in the science, technology and engineering sectors.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a clear and accurate idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They act swiftly when they identify something is not working and thoroughly investigate solutions to whatever problems the school faces. Leaders put clear plans in place along with training to ensure that staff move together on the identified development areas.

The multi-academy trust and those responsible for governance meet their statutory duties for safeguarding and promoting equality. They provide highly effective oversight of the school and useful support and challenge to school leaders.

Leaders act in the best interests of all pupils. Strategic decisions are guided by the school's clear moral purpose to ensure that all pupils thrive. Leaders prioritise the most vulnerable and disadvantaged to ensure that these pupils benefit fully from everything the school offers.

Staff benefit from an extensive professional development programme. This programme has focused on aspects of teaching that will lead to the best possible outcomes and experiences for pupils. Staff, including those new to teaching, appreciate the opportunities that they have to build their expertise and hone their craft. Those with leadership responsibilities participate

in professional learning by undertaking national professional qualifications. They work in partnership with other schools to share good practice.

Leaders take account of staff's wellbeing and make sure that their workload is manageable. For example, many staff commented that the change to the marking policy has reduced their workload in this area. Staff also appreciate how leaders look out for them and are mindful of their personal circumstances.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard 

Leaders' secure understanding of the 16 to 19 study programmes has led to a carefully designed curriculum that provides students access to rigorous academic options and personal interests through extended project work. The extensive offer means pupils in the lower school aspire to reach the sixth form and nearly all want to stay at the school.

The post-16 provision is fully integrated into the life of the school. Students value their provision and they make an excellent contribution to the school. They develop strong study skills and work hard. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and this enables them to achieve as well as their peers, in spite of the challenges they face. Students are supported to develop their own talents and interests separate from their studies. As a result, students achieve exceptionally well by the end of Year 13.

Through the carefully structured and well-designed personal development programme, students are supported well to progress on to the next stage of education. The school has fostered strong links with local employers. This means that students have many opportunities to engage with and learn from employers about the world of work.

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

For many pupils, their experience at Saint Ambrose College is transformational. From the time that they start at the school, they are part of a community where their best interests always come first. Leaders are passionate about creating courageous and empathetic young men. The whole staff team embody the school's values. Pupils say that staff act as very positive role models. As a result, pupils contribute to the highly positive and inclusive atmosphere that pervades the school.

Pupils are proud to be an 'Ambrosian'. They take their responsibilities seriously, such as being a student leader. The older students look after, support and mentor the younger pupils. All pupils look out for each other. Pupils say that what impresses them most about the school is the culture of respect, where different views are heard and all opinions are valued.

Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. They demonstrate very high levels of respect, consideration and care towards each other. Pupils say they feel safe and that staff are willing to listen to and resolve any worries that they may have, including very rare instances of bullying.

Pupils benefit from a superb range of opportunities and activities that develop ‘the whole person’. Their academic, sporting and creative skills as well as their individual talents and interests are provided the time and space to flourish. The opportunities that pupils have to serve others deepens their character, their empathy and their understanding of those who are different to themselves.

Pupils love coming to school and attend regularly. Many said that the highly positive experiences that they have at the school are what gets them out of bed in the morning. Pupils are excited about the ambitious curriculum that the school provides. They benefit from high-quality teaching. Teachers effectively remove any barriers to learning so that all pupils achieve incredibly well. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain the effectiveness of their work in all areas. They should seek continued improvement, overcoming barriers and challenges, in order to drive a transformational impact for all pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are known (or previously known) to children’s social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing.

About this inspection

This school is part of The Laetare Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jonathan Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stephen Horsman.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the principal, deputy principals and other senior leaders, the vice-chair of trustees, a representative from the diocese and 4 governors 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 inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The date of its last section 48 inspection was December 2021.

Lead inspector:

Dave Gilkerson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Al Mistrano, His Majesty's Inspector


Damian Loneragan, His Majesty's Inspector

John Spragg, His Majesty's Inspector

Emma Gregory, 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 25 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,091

Close to 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

1,050

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)

8.03%

Well below 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

0.46%

Well below 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

2.57%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well below 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)	98.0%	45.2%	Above
2023/24 (final)	96.6%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	95.0%	45.3%	Above

Attainment 8

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)	76.1	45.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	73.7	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	72.8	46.3	Above

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)	1.04	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.90	-0.03	Above

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)	84.6%	25.6%	Above
2023/24 (final)	83.3%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	83.3%	25.2%	Above

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)	74.5	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	69.8	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	70.8	35.0	Above

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)	1.33	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.65	-0.57	Above

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)	84.6%	52.8%	31.8 pp
2023/24 (final)	83.3%	53.1%	30.2 pp
2022/23 (final)	83.3%	52.4%	30.9 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)	74.5	50.3	24.2

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	69.8	50.0	19.8
2022/23 (final)	70.8	50.3	20.5

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)	1.33	0.16	1.17
2022/23 (final)	0.65	0.17	0.49

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)	99%	91%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	99%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	98%	94%	Above

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	41.46	34.38	Above
2022/23 (final)	39.44	34.16	Above
2021/22 (final)	44.70	37.86	Above

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (revised)	0.04	0.00	Close to 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 (1 term)	3.1%	7.7%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.4%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.8%	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 (1 term)	4.9%	21.1%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.4%	25.6%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.8%	26.5%	Below

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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