



St George Catholic School for Boys

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116507
LEA Southampton LEA
Inspection number 279847
Inspection dates 28 September 2005 to 29 September 2005
Reporting inspector Marcia Headon HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Leaside Way
School category	Voluntary aided		Swaythling
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Southampton, Hampshire SO16 3DQ
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	02380322603
Number on roll	524	Fax number	02380322606
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr G W Doyle
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs H M Knight

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 28 September 2005 - 29 September 2005	Inspection number 279847
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St George Catholic School is a small voluntary aided boys' comprehensive school, designated as a specialist science and humanities school from September 2005. It has a strong Catholic ethos and because of this takes boys from all wards in Southampton and Hampshire. It currently has no permanent headteacher and is being led by two experienced acting headteachers. Although most boys come from a white British background, there is a slightly higher than average number of pupils of a minority ethnic origin; many of these speak English as an additional language. 14% of the pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities (LLD) and six of these have statements of special educational need. The ability of the pupils on entry is average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school judges its overall effectiveness as satisfactory; a view shared by the inspectors. It provides pupils with a satisfactory education, although standards have not risen significantly over the last five years and pupils make only just satisfactory progress. In a number of respects the school is successful, for example, in promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. The strong Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of the school. While teaching and learning are satisfactory, the curriculum is inadequately matched to meet all pupils' needs with the result that those with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language, are not catered for well. Although, there is currently no permanent headteacher, the acting leadership provides a clear sense of direction and strong, effective management. A well-focused plan to address weaknesses is being implemented and having a positive effect on the school's provision. The recently gained science and humanities specialist status has resulted in the introduction of an enrichment programme which is beginning to improve the boys' ability to work independently. The school has produced an entirely realistic self-evaluation. It clearly possesses the capacity to improve and knows where it needs to focus its energies. It provides satisfactory value for money. The issues raised in the last inspection report have been addressed satisfactorily, although progress in the use of assessment data has been slow. The school continues to work effectively on developing the role of middle managers who are determined to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their departments.

What the school should do to improve further

- * Introduce changes to the curriculum at Key Stage 4 which will allow it to meet fully the needs and interests of all pupils.
- * Raise the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities by improving the coordination of learning support services.
- * Continue to develop the role of the middle managers so that they take greater responsibility for the work of their departments.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school believes that standards are satisfactory overall and this judgement is confirmed by inspection findings. On entry pupils have average levels of attainment in English and mathematics. In 2004, the results at the end of Key Stage 3 in the national tests for English, mathematics and science were roughly in line with the national average and have been so for the last few years. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, boys performed as well as boys did nationally. This applies to the proportion obtaining grades A* - C and A* - G. Fewer pupils obtained the highest grades A* and A. In 2004 the results for combined science and German were particular strengths, while those for English language and history were weaker. In 2005 results in some subjects improved noticeably especially in history, French and English literature. Results in mathematics and German continue to be good. Pupils' progress is satisfactory

overall and progress in mathematics between Key Stages 2 and 4 is good. Pupils are helped by effective teaching in many subjects and they are aware of the levels at which they are working and how they can improve their work. However, the small proportion of boys entering the school with lower levels of attainment does not make as much progress as they should. Their progress is generally hampered because assessment information obtained by the school is not used effectively enough to set sufficiently challenging targets and this information is not used to develop the curriculum at Key Stage 4. The small number of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities make unsatisfactory progress because their particular needs are not addressed thoroughly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Teachers' evident respect for pupils in lessons and concern for their safety and well-being means pupils' social and moral developments are good. Pupils possess a clear awareness and understanding of their own and others' beliefs and interact well with those from different cultural backgrounds. The school provides strong spiritual development. Most pupils enjoy their lessons and participate in clubs, school visits, and extra-curricular games teams. Older pupils are given positions of responsibility as prefects; a role they fulfil conscientiously. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good resulting in an orderly atmosphere. The majority show consideration for others. However, overall behaviour is satisfactory because of a large number of exclusions for unacceptable behaviour. Strategies to reduce bullying have been successful and the school responds quickly to incidents. It has worked hard to improve attendance rates which are now in line with national figures. It monitors rigorously pupils at risk of truancy and follows up reasons for non-attendance promptly. However, a minority of older lower ability pupils do not respond to this support and challenge and are regularly absent. The school's Personal Social and Health Education programme prepares boys well for life outside school. Pupils appreciate the benefits of sensible eating, the dangers of smoking, the need for regular exercise and the importance of fostering stable relationships. The school holds a Healthy Schools award and takes positive steps to promote a healthy diet providing a choice of healthy food at lunchtime and banning fizzy drinks. The school council takes its role seriously and ensures the teachers are aware of its ideas and concerns. At its request, the school installed drinking fountains and introduced more rewards for good work and behaviour. In the community, boys have been enthusiastically involved in campaigns to promote public awareness of the inequalities for farmers in third world countries as well as other fund raising events. Boys work together well in teams, solving problems. Some have taken part very successfully in the Young Enterprise scheme. All pupils in Year 10 take part in work experience from which they develop skills needed in the workplace, but despite this some boys have a limited awareness of work related environments.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In many lessons, teachers demonstrate good teaching and pupils make suitable progress. However, this is not totally consistent across all subjects. This agrees with the school's own evaluation of the quality of teaching. Most lessons are planned well and learning objectives are shared fully with the pupils. They appreciate this as it gives them a clear understanding of what they are expected to achieve. The varied activities within lessons encourage pupils to acquire new skills and challenge pupils to think. Resources are used effectively and interactive whiteboards are used proficiently to present information in an interesting way and stimulate pupils' thinking. However, in some lessons teachers do not provide enough targeted support for pupils with English as an additional language which inhibits these pupils' learning. Teaching assistants, despite their small numbers, are deployed well and provide good support to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. While pupils' work is marked and assessed regularly and pupils receive generally helpful feedback, not all departments use the outcomes of assessment to inform their teaching. Some subjects such as English, mathematics, history and geography have begun to use assessment data systematically to inform pupil and departmental target setting. Increased tracking of progress is providing departments with more guidance on how to improve and some subjects are using this effectively. However, this practice is not yet consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The school offers a curriculum that provides suitable opportunities for the most able pupils. Three sciences, accelerated programmes and advanced subsidiary courses are all offered. However, overall, it does not provide a sufficiently broad or relevant curriculum and is inadequately matched to the full range of pupils' needs and interests. At Key Stage 4 very few pupils study vocational courses and there is little work related learning. There are limited opportunities for those with learning difficulties and disabilities and for pupils for whom English is not their first language. The school's self-evaluation confirms this and the school is currently conducting a curriculum review to consider the best ways of introducing a much wider range of work related courses. The school's designation as a specialist school has recently resulted in the introduction of an enrichment programme for Years 7 to 10 based on integrated science, humanities, mathematics and technology. It is too soon to be able to measure its impact fully, but it has increased the opportunities for pupils to work independently and to make links between subjects. There is also a range of other enrichment activities offered, including school trips, national competitions and summer schools, all of which extend pupils' thinking and knowledge about the wider world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that, although there is a good range of support available from outside agencies, much is reactive and it is not well coordinated. The school admits pupils from different backgrounds and nationalities and individual pupils receive good care and support. However, procedures to support pupils with learning, social and behavioural difficulties are not implemented effectively enough so they do not always make as much progress as they should. Teaching assistants provide good support and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils with English as an additional language are given support in lessons and through withdrawal. They are supported by bilingual teaching assistants. However, some teachers lack a thorough understanding of how to address the needs of these pupils. Teachers know and apply child protection procedures well and the school takes appropriate steps to assess and minimise risks. A supportive breakfast and lunchtime homework club are well attended. Good links with primary schools ensure that teachers know pupils well when they arrive in Year 7. Through an extensive careers programme pupils are well aware of the educational and career options available to them post-16. A higher than average number of pupils enters post-16 education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is being ably led by two acting headteachers, seconded from local schools, who are sharing the responsibility. They are providing very good leadership and management and have quickly acquired an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have provided a much needed sense of direction and clarity of purpose and have established systems which are enabling the school to function more effectively. Inspection evidence agrees entirely with the evaluation of the school which was based upon the school's developing evaluative processes. The senior management team, some of whom are new to the post or are in an acting role, are providing effective support to the headteachers. There have been considerable staffing changes and middle managers are now taking a greater responsibility for ensuring more consistent high quality teaching in their departments. Performance management systems are now being phased in though not yet fully embedded. Senior and middle managers, for example, effectively monitor teaching regularly. The school has made good use of the support afforded by the local authority. The governing body is very committed and supportive of the school and is aware of the need to improve attainment and progress. They are justifiably pleased with the recent accommodation improvements. Though governors monitor the school's progress, they have not consistently or rigorously held the staff to account for its performance. Parents are generally supportive of the school and feel they are kept well informed and consulted. The planned developments in the curriculum together with the sharper focus on teaching and learning, means that the school has the capacity to make further improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We would like to thank you for your contributions to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed meeting with the school council and members of year groups and we learned a great deal from our discussions with many of you in lessons.

Overall your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Your teachers listen to you carefully and encourage your personal development. They are concerned for your safety and well-being and react quickly when you inform them of bullying. The new behaviour policy is working well. The teaching and learning we saw was satisfactory. We saw some good lessons where you were being encouraged to work independently and you were benefiting from the interactive white boards. We were pleased to note that your work is marked and assessed regularly. Your two acting headteachers are leading and managing the school well and are working with the staff to raise achievement.

However, we judge that standards are not high enough, particularly at GCSE. Pupils who find learning difficult are not making enough progress. There is not enough support for these pupils, nor is there enough help for pupils for whom English is not their first language. Another weakness is that the range of subjects on offer in Years 10 and 11 is not wide enough to meet your needs. Some older boys do not attend regularly and this affects their learning. We have informed the school that the following improvements need to be made: the curriculum should be widened to include work related subjects and there needs to be more support provided for those boys who find learning difficult or who do not speak English at home. You also have a part to play in this in that every boy should come to school regularly.