



Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School: A Specialist Science College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119804
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280667
Inspection dates 21 June 2006 to 22 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Beverley Barlow

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Wordsworth Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Accrington
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Lancashire BB5 0LU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 233458
Number on roll	776	Fax number	01254 236355
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Dennis Ford
Date of previous inspection	1 September 1999	Headteacher	Miss Katrina Ryan

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 21 June 2006 - 22 June 2006	Inspection number 280667
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School is a smaller than average mixed comprehensive school for 11 to 16 year olds located in Accrington. There is a higher proportion of boys than girls attending the school. Most of the students are of White British heritage with an increasing proportion from Asian heritage. Most students come from the immediate locality which includes many relatively disadvantaged areas. The proportion of students with additional learning needs and/or a statement of special educational need is higher than average. The school achieved specialist status as a Science College in September 2003. In the last two years, the school has had a large number of new teachers and managers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Mount Carmel is an improving school that is satisfactory with many good features. It is currently in the process of considerable change that is quite rightly focused on raising the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This is beginning to have an impact on achievement and standards. The progress students make at the school has improved over the last three years and is satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 4, boys do not do as well as girls in their GCSE examinations. Overall, students do not do as well as expected in English. Teaching and learning are good. The school is beginning to make good use of data about students' ability and prior attainment to set appropriate targets and monitor their progress. A new system to track students' performance is effective in enabling early intervention for students who are underachieving. Parents are kept very well informed about students' progress and students' achievements are celebrated. Inspectors found inconsistencies in the setting and marking of work and students are not always clear about exactly what they need to do to improve. The school is an inclusive and caring community. Personal development is good and students develop a good appreciation of other cultures. Most students behave well, have a positive attitude to school and contribute to school life, which they enjoy. The curriculum, which is mainly traditional, is satisfactory and the school has in place plans for more appropriate courses to better meet the needs of all students. The school's capacity to improve is good. The headteacher and new senior leadership team provide strong and effective leadership. The school's self-evaluation shows a clear understanding of both the school's strengths and the areas where improvement is needed. Governance is outstanding. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve GCSE examination results, particularly for boys.
- Improve students' progress in English.
- Improve the consistency in the setting and marking of work to ensure that students understand clearly what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' attainment on entry has declined and is below average. At Key Stage 3, students make good progress and standards are average, although the proportion of students reaching their expected target grade in English declined in 2005.

At Key Stage 4, the proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, has improved but standards remain below average. Boys do not do as well as girls. Students do particularly well in GCSE and applied GCSE information technology, but the results in applied GCSE art and design and science were poor in 2005. The proportion of students who achieve five A* to G grades at GCSE is above average and indicates the inclusive nature of the school.

Overall, the progress students make in their time at the school has improved over the last three years and is satisfactory. Students' progress in mathematics is good. Most students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress and some do very well. The school makes good use of its analysis of examination data to identify pockets of underperformance and a strategy to raise attainment across all subjects has been implemented. Students are set realistic and challenging targets and there are clear signs of improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Most students behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Where students' attitudes have been less positive, the school has introduced effective policies to target this behaviour. Students enjoy their experience of school and work hard to achieve the targets set for them. Relationships between all members of the school community are good. Students have many opportunities to take responsibility, for example, as prefects and peer mentors. They are able to influence the school's policies and bring about change by participation in the school council. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's distinctive Catholic ethos brings a special dimension to students' spiritual experience, for example, the participation in masses and retreats. There is a strong emphasis on moral development and students taking responsibility for their own actions. Attendance is closely monitored and is satisfactory.

Students feel safe at school and are confident that any incidents of bullying or racial harassment will be dealt with effectively. Students are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle through a range of healthier eating options and the introduction of water machines. There are good opportunities for healthy exercise through physical education and extra-curricular activities. Students generally become more mature, independent and self-confident as they move through the school. They are satisfactorily prepared for their future education and employment. Students make an outstanding contribution to the wider community; they willingly undertake a wide range of fundraising activities and raise large sums of money for charity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Senior managers and heads of department monitor and evaluate accurately the quality of teaching and learning. They have a very clear view of the strengths and areas for development and are providing good support for staff. Teachers have benefited from a well thought out training programme on how students learn and the features of good lessons. An effective teaching and learning policy has improved the quality of lessons throughout the school and there is a strong emphasis on sharing good practice. Inspectors were only able to observe lessons in

Key Stage 3 and all were at least satisfactory and a few were outstanding. Teachers developed imaginative ways of integrating stimulating subject related activities to enhance the school's multicultural week.

Relationships are strong and teachers know their students very well. Lessons are well planned and the work is matched to the different abilities of students. Students are set clear objectives so they know what they are going to learn and how it links to previous and future work. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of students, an imaginative starter activity quickly engages them and a series of well structured activities maintains a very good pace of learning. Students respond enthusiastically to the dynamic and varied teaching. Teachers use effective questioning techniques to test out learning. In a minority of lessons the pace is slower. Students were not clear about how well they were doing and few opportunities were provided for them to think about and discuss their work. The new information and communication technology (ICT) facilities are used well by some teachers to engage students more actively and develop independent learning.

The school recognises that it still needs to do more work on assessment. There are inconsistencies across subjects in the setting and marking of work. The best marking shows students how well they are making progress in relation to their targets. Teachers' comments are helpful and supportive and tell students exactly what they need to do to improve their work. Students' planners are not used consistently to check up on homework and this is a concern for a few parents.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. As a specialist Science College the school provides a balanced curriculum, but places an appropriate emphasis on enriching the curriculum through its specialist college activities. In particular, it makes very good provision for gifted and talented students. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has improved since the previous inspection. Currently, the curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 is traditional in structure, mainly GCSE courses with few options for students for whom this is not appropriate. The school acknowledges the need to extend its Key Stage 4 provision and a wider range of vocational options are available from September 2006. The school has worked well with other schools in the area and the local further education college; a common prospectus is in place and students from each of the six Hyndburn schools can choose to study the vocational course offered at any of the schools or the college. A well structured PHSE and citizenship programme effectively promotes personal development. Many students participate in the very good range of extra-curricular activities including team sports, drama productions and lunchtime clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is an inclusive and caring school. Students are very positive about the academic and personal support they get from teachers. They are enthusiastic about the new

structure of form groups, each of which now includes a mix of students from every year group. Form tutors are well supported by the heads of house. The majority of parents are pleased with the work of the school. Child protection procedures are comprehensive, up to date and followed by all staff. Health and safety procedures, including risk assessment, receive careful attention and ensure that the school is an orderly place in which to learn and work. The school liaises effectively with outside agencies to identify and support its vulnerable students and those identified as at risk. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution in lessons and in the additional support centre where many students benefit from reading sessions. The school has developed very good links with its feeder primary schools. The transition arrangements for Year 7 students are highly effective and students settle into school quickly. Students benefit from good quality careers education and guidance which helps them to make well informed choices in planning their future. A new tracking system carefully tracks students' progress in relation to their target grades. The new reporting systems ensure that parents are kept well informed about students' progress. A wide range of early intervention strategies have been introduced to try to improve attainment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by an able and enthusiastic newly appointed senior leadership team who work well together. They have a shared vision and commitment to continuous improvement whilst nurturing the strong Catholic ethos. Subject leaders have embraced the need to evaluate the work of their departments and to take effective action to improve standards. They value the high quality support and challenge they receive from the senior team and are now more accountable for their results. This has had a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning but has not yet had an impact on all examination results. Subject leaders use student performance data effectively to track students' progress and to identify underachievement. Some departments analyse assessment results rigorously to identify and address weaker areas of learning, but this good practice is not yet used by all subject leaders. Performance management is linked to the school's focus on improving teaching and learning. The school's self-evaluation report shows that senior managers are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Governors know the school extremely well and are aware of what needs to be done to improve further. They are committed, supportive and hardworking; they carry out their responsibilities very effectively, including challenging the school and holding it to account. They meet their legal responsibilities in full and ensure that Christian values permeate the work of the school.

Day-to-day management is effective and the school runs smoothly. Financial management is secure. Specialist college funding is used well to raise attainment throughout the curriculum and to provide a wealth of enrichment activities within the school and in local primary schools. Staff and resources are well deployed and the

school gives good value for money. All the issues from the last inspection have been addressed and the school has good capacity to improve.

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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?	2	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	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	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?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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

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The students of

Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School: A Specialist Science College

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23 June 2006

Dear students

Thank you for welcoming the Ofsted inspection team into your school last week. We enjoyed our visit to your school. We were able to visit lessons in Key Stage 3 and talk to a number of you and the staff. We also looked at the questionnaires sent in by your parents. The majority of your parents are supportive of the school and its strong Christian ethos. Mount Carmel is a school that is changing in many ways. Science College status has helped the school improve resources and the extra activities that you can do at school.

We were impressed by your good behaviour in lessons and around school. Your school is a friendly and caring place and you receive good support from your teachers. Most of you enjoy coming to school and participate well in sport and fund raising events. Teaching is good and most of you enjoy lessons where there are plenty of activities for you to participate in, especially when you find these challenging. The school lunch menu now offers good opportunities for you to eat a healthy diet and you are quite rightly encouraged to drink plenty of water.

In key Stage 3 you make good progress. We feel that you could do better in your GCSEs, particularly the boys and we have asked your teachers to push you a bit further. The boys need to work harder to catch up with the girls. The school has already introduced extra reading groups to help you make better progress in English. It is important that you try your best and take advantage of the support the school gives you in improving your English. Your progress is regularly assessed and monitored but some subjects do not do this as well as others. We have asked the headteacher to work with staff to ensure that homework is set regularly and that the teacher's marking helps you understand how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve.

Your headteacher is clear about what needs to improve and how this can be achieved. She has worked hard with the staff to make improvements and more are planned. We are confident that the staff at the school can make your school even better. We are sure that you are willing to put in the hard work, which will help improve your opportunities when you leave school.

There is much for you and your teachers to be proud of at Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School. We wish you every success for the future in all that you do.

Yours sincerely

Bev Barlow HMI