

## St Hilda's Church of England High School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104721
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	308657
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paul Chambers HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	870
6th form	206
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs J Stein
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J Yates
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Croxteth Drive Sefton Park Liverpool Merseyside L17 3AL
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 7332709
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Hilda's is an average-sized secondary school with a Church of England foundation. It caters only for girls in the main school. The sixth form is open to girls and boys, although currently the number of boys is very small. The school draws pupils from all eight local authorities within Liverpool Diocese, but predominantly from Liverpool, Sefton and Knowsley. Pupils come from a full range of social backgrounds. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Over 85% of pupils are White British; a large number of other ethnic groups are represented in small numbers. The percentage of pupils for whom English is not their first language is higher than in most schools, but there are currently no pupils at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school holds specialist status in business and enterprise.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is an effective school, which provides its pupils with a good standard of education. Pupils' personal development is outstanding, best exemplified by pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and behaviour around the school. Pupils benefit from the large proportion of good teaching that they receive, and as a result they achieve well. Despite some fluctuation in recent years in national tests and GCSE results, standards have remained well above average throughout. The broad curriculum offers an exceptionally good range of options so that pupils are able to study the subjects that match their needs and interests. The way that the curriculum is managed focuses well on individual needs, and allows an impressive measure of flexibility. Pupils enjoy their time at the school. Because of the high quality of care that the school provides, pupils feel safe and are confident about being able to approach teachers with any problems. Almost all parents feel that their children are well taught and make good progress. However, a substantial number of responses to the inspection questionnaire also highlight parents' considerable concern that the school does not take sufficient account of the views of either pupils or parents, and inspectors agree.

Teachers know their subjects well. They plan lessons that contain a variety of activities and pupils respond well to the tasks that they are given. Where group work is used, pupils share their ideas and support each other's learning in a mature way. Teachers treat pupils with respect and, as a result, classroom relationships are very positive. Many teachers use assessment very effectively to help pupils to learn. For example, they offer good advice on how to improve and encourage pupils to reflect on their own learning. Good practice in teaching and assessment is beginning to be shared, but currently it is not shared widely enough.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher, with support from a good senior management team, has set a clear direction for the development of the school. This recognises the need to retain its traditions while adding to the opportunities on offer to enable pupils to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world. A good example of this is the successful achievement of business and enterprise specialist school status together with the provision of additional vocational opportunities. School leaders have been successful in significantly widening the pupils' experiences while maintaining high standards. The school could make better use of national examination results to compare and evaluate the outcomes of its own provision for all groups of pupils.

Although the school accommodation continues to limit easy movement because of narrow staircases and cramped outdoor areas, the good management of these facilities and the sensible attitudes of the pupils mean that problems are kept to a minimum.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Standards in the sixth form are above those seen nationally. Standards are lower than in the main school, because of the significant number of new students, often with relatively low GCSE grades, who join from other schools. Students achieve well on both academic and vocational courses. They make particularly good progress, year on year, in A-level French. Progress in other subjects is more variable and the school is rightly aiming for more consistently good results. Teaching is good. Students have a wealth of study options to choose from because the school works effectively in collaboration with four other local schools. The school's status as

a business and enterprise college has led to additional courses, which have further enriched the choices available. The life skills course is effective in helping students to prepare for the world of work. Students are well supported in their studies, and demonstrate excellent personal development. For example, they readily take up opportunities to take responsibility through acting as prefects and through managing their study area, and they show good skills of independent learning. However, while the school offers suitable opportunities for students to keep fit through participation in physical exercise, take up rates are low. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Students' views are sought through regular questionnaires, and their responses feed into management decisions. The use of data is helping to focus where additional support is needed.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Take more account of the views of pupils and parents.
- Use national standards more carefully to measure and evaluate the outcomes of provision.
- Share good practice in teaching, learning and assessment more widely.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Standards are well above average and pupils' achievement is good. On entry to the school, pupils' performance is above national expectations for their age. In 2006, the results in the Key Stage 3 national tests in English, mathematics and science were well above average. The provisional results for 2007 show a small improvement. In 2006, the proportion of pupils gaining more than five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, was 76%, which was well above the national average of 44%. The school's unvalidated results for 2007 suggest that there has been a drop in the proportion but it remains well above the national norm. The school meets challenging targets.

Assessment information collected by the school and work seen in lessons during the inspection confirm that all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. The school is very successful in the steps it takes to prevent individual pupils from underachieving and, as a result, significant underachievement is very rare.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, and are particular strengths of the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as demonstrated by their very good attendance, extremely positive attitudes and excellent behaviour in lessons and around the site. They feel very safe and secure, not least because of the exceptionally low incidences of bullying. Pupils understand the need for a healthy lifestyle and many take advantage of the extra-curricular sports activities. The Christian ethos of the school, the comprehensive life skills programme and the opportunities provided in lessons and enrichment activities all contribute to the pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The work-related learning programme, well supported through links to the local business community, makes a major contribution to pupils' future employment prospects. The pupils enjoy the mini-businesses that they operate after school and appreciate the extra time their teachers put into support them. Pupils make

worthwhile contributions to the local and wider community through charities and church-related activities. They have opportunities to take responsibility within the school. Examples of these include the 'buddy' system for newly arrived Year 7 pupils, peer mentoring and helping out at open days and parents' evenings.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school evaluates the quality of teaching and learning as good and inspectors agree. Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond well to the challenges set for them. Pupils enjoy their lessons a great deal; they work hard and behave very well. Teachers foster an extremely positive learning environment through promoting excellent relationships within the classroom.

When teachers provide time in lessons for pupils to discuss ideas and opinions, learners are confident, articulate and keen to demonstrate what they know and understand. One pupil in Year 9 illustrated this well when she said, 'Teachers give us the opportunity to experience, experiment and discuss'. Teachers are making good use of the National Strategy to plan and deliver lessons that are well matched to pupils' differing needs. In a small minority of lessons, learning relies too heavily on teacher direction and tasks that fail to engage pupils' natural curiosity.

Many teachers have introduced excellent practice in enabling pupils to assess the quality of their own and others' work, and some very good examples were seen. Marking of work generally explains to pupils what they must do to improve, but marking practices vary across subjects. In the less effective examples, marking is insufficiently detailed to help pupils to identify strengths and weaknesses in their learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The curriculum is satisfying the needs, interests and aspirations of all pupils very well. In Years 7 to 9, a broad, balanced curriculum meets statutory requirements. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, pupils with particular talents and those whose first language is not English. In Years 10 and 11, there is an extensive range of GCSE and vocational courses, and some pupils benefit from the opportunity to study off-site at a local college or places of work.

The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop the skills needed for the world of work, and all are taught to develop healthy and safe lifestyles through the well-structured life skills programme.

Pupils benefit significantly from the good links with local businesses created through the school's specialist status. These are enriching pupils' experiences within subjects and through additional activities. For example, one group of pupils runs a successful company manufacturing 'smoothies', and donates the profits to charity.

The school successfully encourages a high level of participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and trips abroad, all of which make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and enjoyment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school provides good pastoral care for its pupils and fulfils the current requirements for their safeguarding. High levels of attendance are expected and consistently obtained. When absences occur, they are quickly followed up, and pupils in difficult domestic circumstances are supported to enable them to attend more regularly. Pupils new to the school are helped to settle quickly through well-organised support from older pupils. Teachers and outside agencies offer good guidance to pupils when making choices about the future. The school employs a learning mentor who provides effective additional support for those who may be feeling vulnerable.

Teachers set examination grade targets for pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, but some pupils feel that their individual targets are not sufficiently challenging. The school is at an early stage of setting up systems for canvassing pupils' views, but formal methods of consultation with pupils across a full range of school issues are underdeveloped. Inspectors agree with the significant minority of parents who feel strongly that the school does not listen sufficiently to their views.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The senior team provides strong leadership in taking the school forward. Evidence for this comes from the recent curricular developments, which have provided additional opportunities for meeting pupils' needs. Leadership by middle managers is good. Middle and senior managers have good systems to monitor the quality of their work and, in the main, they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, because these judgements are not always compared to national standards, some judgements are optimistic.

A well-focused programme of professional development for teachers, particularly where it has concentrated on enabling pupils to take a more active role in assessment, has led to good improvements in teaching and learning in many areas. The school has good plans in hand to ensure that improved teaching and better use of assessment become embedded in all lessons.

Links with the community are very strong as evidenced by the excellent collaborative links with local sixth forms and the many community activities developing through the school's business and enterprise status. Given the good improvements since the last inspection and the recent curricular developments, the school has a good capacity to improve.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

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**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

You will recall that we recently inspected your school, and this letter is to share with you some of the most important findings. First, I would like to thank you all for the open and polite way that you responded to the inspection team. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views.

We have judged St Hilda's to be a good school. We were particularly impressed by your attitudes to learning and your behaviour around the school. You work well with each other and enjoy good relationships with your teachers. You make good progress in your learning, mainly because of the large proportion of good teaching that you receive. The school offers you an exceptionally good range of courses to study, and provides you with a good level of care, guidance and support. You told us that you feel safe and are confident about being able to approach teachers with any problems.

Mr Yates and his team run the school well. To make St Hilda's even better, we have asked him, the governors and staff to make improvements in the following areas:

- to take more account of your views and the views of your parents
- to make more careful comparisons between your school and other secondary schools
- to enable teachers to share their ideas more. This will mean that you get even more good teaching and know more clearly how to improve your work.

You can play your part in helping the school to become even better. For example, you can contribute by making your voice heard through the re-formed school council, and can aim for the highest grades in your examinations.