

All Saints Catholic College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106272
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	309079
Inspection dates	22–23 October 2007
Reporting inspector	John Ashton

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1011
6th form	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Campbell
Headteacher	Mr M Bourke
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2003
School address	Kenyon Avenue Dukinfield Cheshire SK16 5AR
Telephone number	0161 338 2120
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized comprehensive school is situated to the east of the city of Manchester. Students attend the school from a wide geographical area because of its Roman Catholic status. They come from a wide range of backgrounds. The large majority of the students are White British. Below average proportions have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A lower than average proportion is eligible for free school meals. There are presently five looked-after students in the school. The school achieved specialist language college status in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

All Saints Catholic College provides a satisfactory and improving level of education for its students. After the last inspection in 2003 there was a period of declining results and underachievement, particularly from middle ability boys. Reasons for this decline included considerable staff turnover resulting in a degree of instability.

It took strong and determined leadership from the headteacher, along with excellent support from both the local authority and the college's experienced and challenging governing body, to turn the school around. Temporary strengthening of the senior leadership team and effective use of external leadership consultancy were crucial parts of the support. Evidence of their success is found in the much improved GCSE results in 2007. Belief that this improvement at GCSE can be extended to equivalent improvements at Key Stage 3 is based upon the track record of the energetic new team of subject leaders recruited in the last few years. In just this short time, the members of this group have helped to bring about a considerable climate change in the school. They have done this by demonstrating their willingness to try out lots of new ideas, to take part in continuous professional development and by their determination to lead and not just manage their departments.

Progress across the key stages has recently improved to satisfactory, though better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3, especially in science. Standards are in line with the national average. The school tackled successfully the underachievement of a large group of middle attaining boys in last year's Year 11 who were thought to have more potential than they were showing. When specifically supported, challenged and given extra incentives to succeed, this group's results at GCSE in 2007 were much better than previously predicted to be. This work is now being extended to boys in Year 9, to this year's Year 11 and also to girls who are thought will benefit from the extra and very focused attention.

The quality of teaching is virtually all at least satisfactory, and a fair amount - though not yet enough to guarantee good achievement - is better than this. Inconsistency is the problem, especially in the quality of teachers' planning and their use of assessment to improve students' learning. The recent issuing of laptop computers to every teacher is helping but there is limited use of modern technology to enhance teaching and learning, often leading to too much passive listening from the students. The curriculum is satisfactory and improving, especially in its widening choice of pathways to learning in Key Stage 4.

Students say that they feel safer than they did in recent years, since behaviour has improved and bullying is dealt with well. They choose healthier food more often, and many are more involved in sport and exercise. There are good examples of student involvement in supporting their own college and the external community. They are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

The mood in the school is now one of constant striving to improve the quality of teaching, investigating more effective ways of organising students' learning, improving the assessment of their learning, tracking students' achievement in a more manageable way and sharing the results of that tracking with students more often. It is early days and there is still a way to go, but the signs of improvement are clear. The illustration above of how the school brought this about demonstrates well its satisfactory capacity to bring about necessary improvements.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students enter the sixth form with standards that are broadly average and make satisfactory progress overall. They achieve pass rates in line with national averages in A-level examinations, although the proportion of higher grades is slightly lower than average. There are fluctuations and differences between subjects, and standards are higher this year in the current group of Year 12 students. The use of data to set challenging targets is a new initiative, the impact of which has yet to be seen. Students are satisfactorily taught, but there are some limitations in the use of assessment in lessons to support their learning. Their positive attitudes and very good behaviour make a strong contribution to their learning. Students enjoy the sixth form and are appreciative of almost all aspects of the school's provision, but would appreciate and benefit from more access to computers in school. They feel safe, secure and valued and that they are offered a good balance of direction and independence. Their enjoyment is reflected in good levels of attendance, much improved since the last inspection. Retention rates are satisfactory. Relationships are good and this factor, together with the students' strong community spirit, are key strengths of the sixth form. There is a good range of enrichment activities which promote well the students' growing maturity and sense of responsibility. The curriculum is satisfactory, although the relatively small size of the sixth form, plus some resistance on the part of the students to follow vocational courses, have imposed limitations on curricular breadth. The school has collaborative arrangements with a few neighbouring educational institutions to provide some additional courses which are gradually growing in popularity. Students are well supported pastorally but care, guidance and support as a whole are satisfactory rather than good. This is because the monitoring and support roles of staff in tracking students' performance and in providing more appropriate academic guidance are only now starting to develop. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take steps to match the recent improvements in students' achievement at Key Stage 4 with similar improvements at Key Stage 3, especially in science.
- Improve the proportion of good and better teaching, including the quality and consistency of lesson planning and the use of assessment to raise students' progress.
- Improve resources for information and communication technology (ICT), particularly within classrooms.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards that vary from year to year, but which are generally slightly above the national average. In 2006, students in Year 9 gained standards broadly in line with the national average in mathematics, significantly above average in English but significantly below average in science. The 2007 results were higher in both mathematics and science, but lower in English. Overall this represents satisfactory and improving progress for most students. The proportion of students gaining five or more higher GCSE grades has

usually been broadly in line with national averages, but it dipped in 2006 to significantly below average. Results in English were of particular concern. This represented unsatisfactory progress compared to most students' starting points at the end of Year 9. Results in 2007 were very much improved, however, especially in English.

In recent years, boys have performed less well than girls. This galvanised the school in 2006 into taking part in a national programme to improve boys' achievements and, as a result, the gap between boys' and girls' attainment narrowed considerably in 2007. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making as much progress as their peers due to the good support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' social and moral development is satisfactory. Their attendance is satisfactory and punctuality has improved significantly. Students respond to recently developed systems of rewards and sanctions with predominantly good behaviour around the college and positive attitudes in class. Effective work by teaching and support staff is reducing low-level disruption of a few lessons by a minority of students.

Students' spiritual awareness is well developed. They make sound preparations for life through structured programmes of personal, social and health education and citizenship. They feel safe around the school, appreciate its promotion of healthy living and subscribe to its developing culture of encouragement and recognition of effort. Students' enjoyment of school is enhanced through frequent chances to make their voices heard through surveys and the college council, and to take on responsibilities as important as participating in the appointment of new staff. Students enjoy opportunities to join in extra-curricular activities, including sport and service to the community, but would still like more of such provision. Students' good humour and confidence is evident, and most acquire the literacy, numeracy and cooperative skills they will require in the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but inconsistent. There is much good practice within the school, which is not shared well enough. Teachers show enthusiasm for their subjects. Most plan their lessons well with appropriate and varied activities, but elsewhere a lack of attention to planning leads to weaknesses in lesson delivery. There are generally good relationships between the students and the teachers. Teaching assistants work well with students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In some lessons, tasks are not always well matched to the needs of all the students, with some of the students finding the work too difficult and some of them finding it too easy. Although teachers usually explain to the students what they should be achieving by the end of the lessons, sometimes this is not made clear enough and the students have difficulty in understanding exactly what it is they should be able to do. Not enough teachers check the progress of individual students within lessons to help them improve their work. Books are marked regularly, but not always with enough detail to

help them progress as well as they might. When asked how they could learn better, several students said, 'Motivate us more, by telling us why we've done well.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced for students in Years 7 to 9. A second language is offered for the most able students, reflecting the school's specialism. In Years 10 and 11, there are three pathways, which between them cater well for the needs of all the students. There is an improving range of vocational courses and work-related activities, as well as careful planning of careers advice and 'enterprise' days. Citizenship and personal, social, and health education in Years 10 and 11 are currently dealt with well as modules within religious studies and science. The school is aware of the possible dangers of teaching ICT to some students across a number of subjects rather than as discrete lessons, and takes steps to try to ensure that no students miss important parts of the programme of study. 'A* master classes' in modern foreign languages have been introduced to stretch further the higher attainers, but it is too early to see the impact of this initiative. An adequate range of extra-curricular activities is on offer, including sports, music and learning Chinese. Students were particularly enthusiastic about the Duke of Edinburgh Award and felt that the challenges there prepared them well for the future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The college provides good pastoral care for its students. They benefit from well organised transition from primary school. Well considered child protection procedures and mentoring promote students' welfare and safety. Students are closely supervised both in and out of college, with detailed risk assessments conducted where needed. Teaching staff are sensitive to students' feelings and anxieties, particularly those of the most vulnerable. They include all students, from the most talented to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in every aspect of college life. Students respond well to the increased number of staff specialising in support. A minority of parents feel that they are not kept fully informed of issues relating to their children's personal progress. Recently introduced electronic records of students' achievement have improved the quality, detail and accessibility of assessment data. This innovation is enabling more accurate tracking of progress, target-setting and intervention, but its full impact has yet to be felt. Good careers guidance prepares students well for academic and vocational options, which are supplemented by productive links with external agencies and local colleges.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

In recent years, the rapid turnover of key staff, along with the illnesses of some others, has put severe pressures upon the remaining members of the leadership team. With effective external support, the senior leadership weathered the storm and demonstrated that they have both the will and the capacity to improve the college further. Middle leadership of key subject areas and

year groups has been reinvigorated, and the effects are apparent in more effective teamwork and improving results. The school has a generally accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Systems for monitoring the work of departments are increasingly effective but are yet to bring about much needed consistency in, for example, lesson planning and the assessment of students' work. Governance is good. Financial management is prudent. The experienced governing body challenges in a very supportive and helpful way and, along with the resilient leadership of the headteacher and his senior colleagues, is a key factor in the school's recent improvement. Improvements in accommodation since the last inspection have enhanced some of the learning environment for students, although there is scope for further development of resources, particularly in terms of ICT.

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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?	3	3
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?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
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	

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

Inspection of All Saints Catholic College, Dukinfield, SK16 5AR

Thank you for the welcome so many of you gave to us. We thoroughly enjoyed our time in your college. A special thank you must go to those students who met with us on the Monday and also those who allowed us to look over their shoulders in class at the quality of their work. You told us many good things about the college, including how well you are looked after and how safe and secure you feel, how the college has improved recently, and how much you appreciate the new consequences and praise systems, and the new traffic light system for keeping you in touch with how well you are doing.

You also told us, and we agree with you, that the school is strict over uniform standards, that there is a little bit of poor behaviour in those lessons where students are not kept well enough focused, and that many of the learning objectives could be clearer and more helpful.

There are three things in particular we would like your college to do better.

- Raise standards and achievement further in Years 7, 8 and 9, especially in science.
- Improve resources for ICT, particularly in the classrooms.
- Ensure that the teachers all build their lessons more around what you need to learn, and that they involve you even further in assessment of your own work.

We wish every one of you well for the future and hope that you will always work as hard and enjoy being at All Saints as much as you do now.