

St John Bosco Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104715
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	336354
Inspection dates	4–5 May 2010
Reporting inspector	David Cox

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	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1094
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Gibbons
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Pontifex
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2007
School address	Stonedale Crescent Croxteth Merseyside L11 9DQ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons and observed 32 different teachers. They held meetings with staff, groups of students, governors and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors did not hold meetings with parents and carers. They observed the school's work, looked at students' books and documentation related to safeguarding, students' progress, teachers' assessments and development planning. In total 371 parents' and carers' questionnaires were analysed together with questionnaires from staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of strategies for improving standards and achievement in mathematics
- the quality of sixth form provision and whether students are making good progress and achieving well in the sixth form
- the effectiveness of strategies for improving attendance and overcoming persistent absence
- whether the school has moved from providing a good education, as noted by the previous inspection report, to one that is providing an outstanding education for its students.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. Most of the students who attend are of White British heritage. The proportion of students from a minority ethnic background is below average as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.

The school is a specialist arts college. Since September 2005 it has been part of the Alt Valley Collaborative for sixth form provision. It is a host site for the Bosco City Learning Centre. The school's provision in the arts, in sport and in promoting healthy living, together with numerous other aspects of its work, have been acknowledged by a number of national awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Since the last inspection, when it was deemed good, it has made excellent progress under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and other senior leaders. The persistence with which leaders at all levels pursue improvement has a very positive impact on outcomes for students, most of which are outstanding, and the quality of provision. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers support the school's consistently high expectations of their children. There are many outstanding features, including the high-quality care, guidance and support provided for students, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, the arrangements for safeguarding students and the effectiveness with which the school promotes community awareness. The attention given to individual students is exceptional and reflects the effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity. Students feel very safe and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The view of one student was that 'SJB helps you become a more rounded person and is fully behind us in everything we do.'

When they start this school, the level of students' skills varies but, overall, it is below average. Standards of attainment are above average by the end of Year 11; students make outstanding progress, overall, and the quality of learning is excellent. Students are socially very adept and have strong moral values. Their behaviour is exemplary and their excellent work ethic helps them to achieve exceedingly well. These exceptional attributes are a result of very strong teaching, an outstanding curriculum that is suitably adapted to meet the needs of individual students and very rigorous tracking of students' progress.

Students enjoy school. Their much improved attendance and their eagerness to contribute to school life and the wider community is testament to the dedication and hard work of staff and other adults who work tirelessly for the good of the students. Despite the outstanding work of the school and the support of external agencies, there remains a very small minority of students who continue to be persistently absent and do not take full advantage of the wonderful opportunities the school offers.

The school's specialist status plays a huge part in the personal development of the students and is very effective in reaching out to the local community. Nearly all students gain an award based on the arts by the end of Year 9 and many gain valuable life skills from working alongside organisations such as the English National Ballet.

Students' progress in the sixth form is good rather than outstanding. This is because teaching is occasionally more didactic and is not as inspirational as that seen in the main school.

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Outstanding leadership at all levels ensures that students are provided with the very best education. Leaders are never complacent. They are supported by the members of an outstanding governing body who challenge leaders to improve every aspect of students' education. Rigorous self-evaluation and an absolute focus on providing the very best education for students are central to all the school does. The very effective response to the previous inspection report has resulted in significant improvements in standards of attainment, particularly in English and mathematics. The rate at which students make progress is now in the top 5% of schools nationally. All this provides evidence to support the judgement that the school has an outstanding capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure outstanding progress for all students in the sixth form by:
 - bringing about further improvements in teaching
 - introducing a wider range of teaching styles to stimulate more active participation from students in lessons.
- Help the very small minority of students who do not attend school regularly by being even more rigorous in reaching out to them and helping them to improve their attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Students thoroughly enjoy learning and they achieve extremely well. Standards of attainment have continued to rise overall, particularly in English and mathematics. This is because of the improved teaching and learning in these two areas and the strong focus on literacy and numeracy in other subjects of the curriculum. The excellent support provided for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities or whose circumstances make them more vulnerable than most enables them to progress extremely well. The small proportion of students who speak English as an additional language make the same progress as their peers. Typically, students take great pride in their work and are keen to demonstrate to visitors just how well they are doing. They are very attentive and listen carefully to instructions. When answering questions they are confident and also respectful of the answers given by others. 'Having a go and not being scared,' is a typical comment from students. Lessons are often lively and good humour is a feature of most lessons. Students demonstrate good information and communication technology (ICT) skills and younger students, all of whom have been given a laptop, enhance their research skills through the use of the extensive computer resources. Students feel very safe in school and say, 'The school is an oasis for all that is good in life.' They are very aware of the potential dangers of the internet.

The girls have a real voice through the school council and the numerous other organisations in which they are members. They know that their contributions are valued and acted upon. They have played an important role in the initial design concept for their new school buildings. There are many opportunities for students to work in the

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local community. Students in Year 9, through the Youth St Vincent de Paul group, work with older people and the young people of Croxteth. Students know the importance of healthy lifestyles and the catering team go out of their way to provide healthy options. However, a small minority know that they do not always eat healthily or take enough exercise. Students are environmentally aware through the many eco-projects in which they are involved. They have an excellent understanding of the diverse communities and cultures found in the United Kingdom and beyond. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their lives by their experiences at St John Bosco. They leave with a good range of important skills and the confidence to apply them in new situations. Many go on to further and higher education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Nearly all teaching is at least good and a substantial proportion is outstanding. Together with rigorous and supportive assessment, this ensures that students' progress is rapid and their quality of learning is excellent. Activities are very well planned to meet the needs of all students. This was seen in a design and technology lesson where students

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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were carefully taken through each step of the process of producing a three-dimensional drawing. Any students that fell behind were immediately given additional support. Teachers' knowledge and love of their subject are evident and they obviously enjoy sharing their enthusiasm with students. This results in the excellent relationships observed between students and teachers and helps to build students' motivation and confidence. Throughout the school, students are aware of their targets and the levels at which they are working. Some excellent examples of helpful marking were seen, particularly in English.

The curriculum has been remodelled in recent years, particularly in terms of the vocational and work-related programmes, in response to the needs and interests of students. Students of all ages speak highly of the opportunities provided through these changes and the impact can be seen in rising standards and levels of attendance. Cross-curricular links are very well developed, which enable students to apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to support their work in a range of subjects. Students have many rich experiences which enhance their learning. They thoroughly enjoy their visits out of school and welcome visitors who bring learning to life and promote their wider personal development and well-being. They participate in a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and receive specialist support from a range of external providers that enhance their aesthetic development considerably through projects funded via the specialist college.

Parents and carers are full of praise for the time and effort staff put in to ensure that students are nurtured, reassured and encouraged to become confident young people. The high-quality care that the school provides ensures a warm, welcoming environment for all students and their families. The 'Big Fish, Little Fish' transition programme supports vulnerable pupils from Year 6 into Year 7 to ensure improved attendance. There are excellent procedures for chasing up those students who do not attend on a regular basis and these have been very successful in improving attendance levels for virtually all students. However, the school recognises that it needs to work even harder to reach out to a very small minority who choose not to attend. The school liaises very effectively with other agencies and key partners, such as the community police team, to ensure a team approach to dealing with individuals and that students get the best available support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

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The headteacher and governors are outstandingly successful in promoting a shared ambition and determination that all students will have maximum benefit from their schooling. There is a clear focus on improving provision while retaining and building on the very successful aspects of the school that are producing such outstanding outcomes for students. This is reflected in whole-school development planning which is tightly focused on raising outcomes for students. Over the last three years, marked improvements have taken place in students' attainment, progress and in the quality of teaching and learning, and assessment. Monitoring and evaluation is rigorous and systems for tracking students' progress are used very effectively by leaders at all levels. A comprehensive professional development system, often led by the lead departments within the arts, is ensuring teaching is of the highest quality. Governors willingly bring their expertise to the service of the school and make a valuable contribution to establishing and maintaining its strong ethos and high morale, and ensure that it achieves outstanding value for money. They hold school leaders to account for driving improvement on the basis of a thorough knowledge and understanding of the school's priorities, the expectations of the local community and their robust monitoring of the school.

The school's partnerships with parents and carers and with other agencies are excellent. Parents and carers feel very included in their children's education. Partnerships with other schools, colleges, universities and external providers and organisations all contribute very significantly to the well-being and experiences of all students. Outstanding safeguarding procedures follow recommended best practice and it is evident that the school emphasises safety to students in lessons and within the curriculum. From the minute visitors, including inspectors, enter the school, the strictest of safety checks are carried out. The school is very determined to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed and is not in any way disadvantaged. The outstanding achievement of all groups of students indicates the success of the school's policies and interventions. Students of all backgrounds and abilities are integrated exceedingly well and have the help they need to succeed. The school is extremely effective at promoting community cohesion. It is also very successful in reaching out to a wide range of groups in the Croxteth community. The 'Mums and Daughters' dance group helps to bring together family members in activities that they can share and enjoy. The school plays a significant role in the project against guns, gang and knife crime in the wider community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<p>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</p>	<p>1</p>

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Sixth form performance has shown good improvement since the previous inspection. This is because of the good leadership and management of the sixth form and the rigorous monitoring and evaluation carried out by senior leaders.

Many of the students currently in the sixth form entered with below average standards of attainment in comparison with other sixth form institutions. Students make good progress and their quality of learning is good. By the time they leave the sixth form their standards of attainment have improved and are broadly average. The quality of teaching is good. The best lessons seen in the sixth form provided a good level of challenge to students, but this was not consistent across all lessons. In the best lessons teachers made skilful use of questions to prompt longer and more considered responses from students and were not satisfied with simple answers. These teachers used their subject knowledge and personal experience well to motivate students and guide them on how to improve. While students enjoy most lessons, there are occasions when they find the activities rather mundane and less inspiring. On these occasions their learning slows and they lose interest in the activity.

Extensive improvements to the curriculum and the opportunities provided through the Alt Valley Collaborative and the Bosco City Learning Centre have encouraged more students to enter the sixth form. A high proportion of students complete their chosen courses and go on to further education, training or employment, many into higher education. Students say they receive good-quality advice and support concerning their future options after the sixth form, which enables them to make sensible, reasoned choices.

Students in the sixth form have the same excellent attributes as the younger students in the school. They are keen to give something back to the school and are excellent role models. They support younger students in many areas of the curriculum. Sixth form students take a lead in many of the extensive activities that the school has to offer based on the arts.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over one third of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire they were asked to complete prior to the inspection. Nearly all the parents and carers who responded were very supportive of the school's work. Almost all respondees said their children were safe at school and cared for well, that the school was led and managed well and they were happy with their children's experience at the school. Inspectors certainly support the view that students are extremely well cared for and that the school is very well led. Students told inspectors that they were very happy at St John Bosco. In a tiny minority of cases, concerns were expressed about the staggering of the dining arrangements at lunchtime. Inspectors were assured that they were known to the school and were in the process of being addressed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John Bosco Arts College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 371 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,023 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	99	27	244	66	22	6	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	158	43	205	55	6	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	164	44	201	54	5	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	153	41	210	57	6	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	139	37	228	61	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	108	29	252	68	9	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	92	25	248	67	21	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	136	37	218	59	7	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	110	30	248	67	9	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	139	37	218	59	7	2	1	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	105	28	236	64	16	4	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	135	36	230	62	2	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	169	46	196	53	2	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



06 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of St John Bosco Arts College, Croxteth, L11 9DQ

On behalf of my colleagues and myself may I thank you very much for your most warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. I am sure you will be delighted to know that we judge your school to be outstanding. We were very impressed with much that we saw, but I want to highlight your extremely mature and thoughtful behaviour and your excellent attitudes as very significant factors towards your outstanding achievement.

There are so many things that your school does so very well. Some of these are:

- the excellent teaching which helps you to do really well with your work
- the way in which the school helps you all get on so well together and behave sensibly
- the many exciting things you have to do in and out of class
- how well you are looked after and supported
- the excellent way in which the school is run.

Even in outstanding schools there are still things that can be improved. To help with this your headteacher and the governors have agreed these things with me.

- They need to ensure that students in the sixth form make the same outstanding progress as those in the main school. We have suggested that they bring this about by making further improvements in teaching and ensuring that teachers use a wider range of teaching styles.
- They will help the very small minority of students who choose not to attend school regularly by being even more rigorous in reaching out to them and helping them to improve their attendance.

Thank you again for helping with the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Cox

Lead inspector

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