

Holy Trinity Catholic Media Arts College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103538
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376928
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Merchant

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	604
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Tony Rohan
Headteacher	Connie McCormack
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2009
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Merchant

Additional inspector

William Cassell

Additional inspector

Susan Laffey

Additional inspector

David King

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Thirty-two lessons taught by 31 teachers were observed, and three observations were carried out jointly by the inspectors and the senior staff. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body, staff, external consultants and officers of the local authority. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at: the plans for improvement, assessment information, lesson plans, the school's monitoring information and a range of school policies. They also analysed inspection questionnaires received from 34 parents and carers, staff and 93 students.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average sized comprehensive school. The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, are above average and include students with moderate learning difficulties. A very large majority of students are of a wide range of minority ethnic heritages, the largest group being students of Asian or Asian British, Pakistani heritage. A well-above-average proportion of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is also well above average. The school does not meet the government's floor standard. The school has specialist status in media arts. There has been a high degree of turbulence in the senior and middle leadership team and significant long-term staff absences.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	4

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the leadership and management of the school.
- Although the school is providing an acceptable standard of education, its overall effectiveness is inadequate because the persons responsible for leading, managing and governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- School leaders have not addressed the school's weaknesses with sufficient urgency and there has been insufficient progress since the previous inspection.
- School governors have not held the school's leaders sufficiently to account. The effectiveness of middle leaders is variable and their roles have not been developed well enough for them to be fully accountable for students' attainment and progress in their respective areas.
- Most students, including those with disabilities and those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily overall. Students' progress in mathematics is slower than it is in English.
- Teaching is satisfactory and ensures students' satisfactory learning and achievement, but there is still not enough good teaching to make up for lost ground. In some lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and activities are not closely matched to the capabilities of different students. The time at the end of lessons is not used effectively to check how well students have fulfilled their objectives, what they have learned and what they need to do to further improve.

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- Students' behaviour is satisfactory and improving. A large minority of parental and student questionnaires express concern about the disruption to learning in some classes. This is generally where teaching does not sufficiently capture students' interests or the school systems for managing behaviour are not applied consistently.
- Most students say that they are safe in school. Students with whom the inspectors held discussions noted that instances of bullying are addressed promptly by the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of progress that all groups of students make, particularly in mathematics, from satisfactory to at least good by:
 - making sure that at the end of each lesson, students have a clear idea of what they have learnt, whether they have fulfilled their personal objectives and what they need to do to improve further.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better in most lessons by:
 - making sure that there is a closer match between work set and the different abilities of students
 - giving students more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to be more active and inquisitive in class
 - ensuring all lessons are sufficiently challenging and move at a brisk pace.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - ensuring that the governing body has the skills and knowledge to be better able to hold school leaders to account
 - developing the role of subject leaders so that all become accountable for students' attainment and progress in their respective areas
 - strengthening the senior leadership team to ensure that the improvements to the school's monitoring and tracking systems are sustained
 - ensuring that the school's behaviour policy is implemented consistently to prevent inappropriate behaviour from interrupting students' learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students join the school in Year 7 with below-average attainment. By Year 11, students' attainment, as measured by average points scores across all their subjects, has been rising and is above average. However, attainment in GCSE subjects is variable and is broadly average, although the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics was below

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average in 2011. School data, and work seen by inspectors, show that performance on this measure is on track to be close to that expected nationally this year. Attainment is consistently above average in the vocational subjects, especially media studies.

Most students, including those who speak English as an additional language, those eligible for free school meals and those belonging to the wide range of minority ethnic groups, make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points when they joined the school. However, whilst the school has maintained students' good progress in English, achievement overall is not as high as at the time of the previous inspection because progress in mathematics has only been satisfactory in recent years. In 2011 many students made slower than expected progress in this subject because of instabilities in staffing. Currently, achievement is rising strongly in mathematics and the gap to national standards is closing.

The school works satisfactorily to support students who enter with particularly low levels of attainment and the high number who speak English as an additional language. Plans to support these groups, coupled with the thoughtful deployment of learning assistants and timely interventions, ensure that they make similar progress to their classmates. Teaching assistants provide sound support for disabled students and those with special educational needs. This helps them to overcome many of the barriers in their lives and make progress which is equal to that of their peers.

The quality of learning in nearly all lessons is at least satisfactory. However, questions are not always used effectively to probe students' understanding and students sometimes mark time because the work is too easy. Students say they enjoy lessons that engage them in 'hands on' activities, as in games and media studies, and they particularly enjoy the investigative and research aspects of vocational subjects. While these features of the college's specialist subject are beginning to improve learning, not all lessons challenge students to think for themselves or support them in developing independent learning skills such as investigation, research and problem solving. This often impedes the engagement and progress of boys in particular, who attain less well than girls. Much of the students' learning is through narrative. Consequently, their literacy skills are better developed than their numeracy skills.

In a minority of lessons, learning is good or better. For example, in an outstanding Year 7 English lesson, students were spellbound by the class teacher's lively and inspirational exposition. Her skilful use of questions encouraged students to express their feelings eagerly following a video clip of Bondai Beach and prompted all to make rapid progress in developing their descriptive writing skills. However, this excellent practice is not characteristic of learning throughout the school.

The majority of parents and carers who returned inspection questionnaires agreed that their children are making good progress and that their needs are well met. Inspection evidence indicates that although progress has started to improve, overall, students' progress is no better than satisfactory.

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Quality of teaching

Inspection evidence indicates that teachers' expectations of what students of all abilities can achieve are generally satisfactory, although not high enough at times. The inspection's findings do not confirm the view expressed by those parents and carers who believe that teaching is good. Most teachers ensure that students understand what they are expected to learn. In the most effective lessons, teachers review students' learning at regular points to keep the level of challenge appropriate. Teachers and teaching assistants work soundly together to meet students' needs, particularly for those who find learning difficult. Teachers' assessments and marking of students' work are satisfactory, although inconsistencies remain. Students' reading abilities are now regularly tested and progress is tracked effectively.

Although improving, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain both between and within subjects, which inhibit students' progress from being good in too many lessons. In a minority of lessons, such as in English, modern languages and media studies, students benefit from effective teaching and teachers' high expectations. Here, students make good progress because activities are carefully designed to challenge them to learn at a swift pace. For instance, in an effective Year 8 music lesson, all students made good progress at developing 'hip-hop' rhymes. The teacher motivated students very well by using video clips to model 'hip-hop' lyrics and then challenged them to devise their own.

Teachers sometimes talk too much, which limits the time students are actively and independently learning, resulting in slower progress and less time for them to discuss what they have learnt. The pace of work in some lessons is pedestrian and opportunities are missed to encourage students to explain their ideas fully and so improve their language skills. Teachers do not always use the time at the end of lessons to check up on how well students have progressed with their learning and to identify any gaps. Helpfully, the school has begun to focus staff development on ensuring that every lesson maximises the potential of all students.

Assessment procedures to check students' progress have improved recently. Consequently, teachers are more aware of the progress of different groups of students, including those who need to make up lost ground. Students have targets in English and mathematics, but their knowledge of these is variable.

The satisfactory curriculum makes use of new technologies effectively in some lessons to engage students' interest. Students do not always use the skills they have learned in English and mathematics lessons as well as they should in the other subjects they study.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Overall, behaviour in lessons is satisfactory. However, it is dependent on the extent to which teaching engages the students and, occasionally, lessons are interrupted by

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low-level disruption. This is confirmed by the college's own records over time and in discussion with the students. It is also evident in the questionnaires completed by students, staff, parents and carers. Nevertheless, the majority of students say that behaviour is improving. With the help of external consultants, the college has introduced a new policy to improve behaviour and there are good examples of where these procedures have supported individual students effectively. Very few students are now excluded. However, the inconsistent application of the behaviour policy by staff reduces its impact in lessons.

Students say they feel safe and this is corroborated by the questionnaires that they and their parents and carers completed. A few parents and carers expressed concerns that bullying is not dealt with effectively. Inspectors found that the college follows appropriate procedures. The large majority of students agree that the college deals well with instances of bullying of any type. Students appreciate the fact that the staff know them well in this smaller-than-usual college. They say they like the 'family' atmosphere. The college has worked hard to improve students' attendance, particularly in working with parents and carers to instill the importance of regular attendance. Consequently, attendance has improved significantly and is now above average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has shown strong leadership in tackling weaknesses in staff performance and has not shirked the harsh decisions necessary. However, this has led to gaps in many senior- and subject-leader positions and consequently, until recently, self-evaluation procedures have not been rigorous enough in teasing out why students' progress has declined in recent years. Progress on the key issues at the previous inspection has been inconsistent and students' achievement, behaviour and teaching, which were all judged to be good at the previous inspection, have declined and are now satisfactory. Consequently, the school's capacity to improve is inadequate.

There have been some successes. Assessment information is now being used rigorously by leaders to identify where progress is too slow so that any potential underachievement can be tackled quickly. However, this has come about through strong support from external consultants and the school has found difficulty in recruiting suitable staff to fill its vacant leadership posts.

The school monitors the quality of teaching regularly. However, it puts too strong a focus on what teachers do rather than how much students learn. Consequently, the professional development of staff has not been sufficiently effective in ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is improving fast enough. Leaders have not communicated high expectations persuasively enough to all staff to ensure that all have a shared sense of direction and feel part of a successful team. Most middle leaders are eager to be accountable for their respective areas but there are inconsistencies in the way they monitor standards, learning and teaching and these are holding back further improvements in students' achievement.

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The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging leaders and holding them to account for the quality of information, provision and outcomes, is not sufficiently well developed. Good practice in safeguarding and child protection is evident in all areas of the school's work. For instance, checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is satisfactory because it builds on students' previous learning and prepares them adequately for the next stages of their education. The satisfactory range of learning opportunities benefits students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

At the time of the inspection, there was no evidence of any discrimination and the school promotes equality for all students through careful monitoring and appropriate support. Outcomes for all groups of students, given their different starting points, are broadly similar, indicating that the school's commitment to equal opportunities is translated into practice.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Student referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a student in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

26 January 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Holy Trinity Catholic Media Arts College, Birmingham, B10 0AX

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we came to inspect your school. In meetings and in the questionnaire, you told us that you enjoy coming to school and that you feel safe there. You also make satisfactory progress in the work that you do in lessons and in some lessons that we saw, you made good progress. Most of you work hard and your results at the end of Year 11 have begun to improve, especially in English and in your vocational subjects.

While these are some of the positive things, we think that your school is not doing as well as it used to. We judge its overall performance to be inadequate and have given it a notice to improve. We have asked the headteacher, teachers and governors to make some important improvements. Inspectors will visit the school quite soon to check how well it is doing.

These are some of the things we have asked your school to do to make it better.

- Make sure that all of you make the fastest progress that you can, by checking that you all know just the right things to do to reach your targets.
- Ensure that the work planned for you in lessons is neither too easy nor too difficult, and gives you opportunities to find things out for yourselves.
- Carefully watch the progress that you make in lessons and ensure that none of you fall behind.
- Ensure that instances of silly and inappropriate behaviour do not spoil learning.
- Help the school governors to play a bigger part in improving your school.
- Make sure that subject leaders check on how well you are taught and how well you are doing.

Ms McCormack, the staff and the governors want the school to improve quickly. You can help too by making sure you work hard all the time, behave well in all lessons and always do your best.

Thank you once again for being so helpful.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant
Lead inspector

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