

Leyland St Mary's Catholic Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119816
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358634
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Jean Kendall HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	774
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Jones
Headteacher	Mr Michael Wright
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed 40 lessons and saw 40 teachers. They held meetings with groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's monitoring, tracking of students' progress, self-evaluation and improvement planning. They took account of 297 parental questionnaires, 117 pupil questionnaires and 55 returns from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The quality of teaching and the progress of students in mid-ability and lower-ability sets.
- The quality of the curriculum.
- The capacity of leadership to secure further improvement.

Information about the school

St Mary's Catholic Technology College serves the town of Leyland and the surrounding area. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below average and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is about average. The college gained specialist technology status in 1996 and was re-designated in 2007. It gained a second specialism as an Applied Learning School under the High Performing Specialist School programme. It has gained a number of external awards including Investors in People, Healthy Schools, Artsmark Silver and Sportsmark. A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection and the senior leadership team has been restructured.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St Mary's is a good school. It has several outstanding features including highly effective leadership and an innovative curriculum that promotes good achievement for all students. It provides good value for money.

The school is a highly cohesive community where staff and students share a strong sense of belonging. Students make an excellent contribution by taking on positions of responsibility, supporting those new to the school and contributing their ideas to improve provision. Their good attitudes to learning and considerate behaviour promote a friendly and welcoming environment. Students feel extremely safe because they are confident that adults will deal appropriately with any issues. The school is highly respected in the local community and makes a strong contribution to community cohesion. The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires are highly satisfied with the quality of education, stating, 'Each child's needs are considered and catered for.' and citing the, 'warmth, community spirit, teaching and excellent leadership' as strengths.

The broad curriculum is very effectively adapted to meet individual needs. It successfully promotes key skills and gives students access to several vocational courses as well as the more academic subjects. The school has developed highly effective partnerships which are of mutual benefit. It leads delivery of an Engineering Diploma course which is attended by students from high schools across the locality. Its strong links with several primary and secondary schools, partner companies, professional institutions and further education colleges enhance the experience of students. Students enjoy school because they feel well cared for and supported in all aspects of their development. Their enjoyment is reflected in their higher-than-average attendance and full participation in school life and extra-curricular activities.

Students make good progress in lessons because teaching is consistently good across all subjects and ability groups. However, there are a few occasions when lessons do not make full use of information about students' prior learning. In such lessons, activities are not sufficiently differentiated to ensure that all students make the best possible progress. Assessment processes have been recently reviewed. There is some excellent practice in assessment and marking in English and technology but these approaches are not fully consistent across the whole school. The most effective teaching gives students opportunities to investigate and work independently on challenging tasks. Students rise to the challenge and show application and perseverance when given such opportunities both in class and through home-based learning. The school has identified this as an area for further development.

School leaders and the governing body set challenging targets which have been met for the last three years. The rigorous approach to self-evaluation and improvement planning at both strategic and departmental level is successfully raising achievement. Students

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make good progress from broadly average levels of attainment on entry to achieve above average standards in most subjects. They do particularly well and attain significantly higher-than-average standards in English, mathematics and the school's specialist technology subjects. Consistently good teaching, outstanding curriculum and purposeful leadership secure excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain the high levels of attainment in core subjects and raise achievement further in other subjects by:
 - embedding the most effective practice in assessment across the whole school
 - using assessment information to plan challenging activities in all lessons so that all students make the best possible progress
 - promoting students' independent learning in lessons and through home learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students have a good attitude to learning and are highly motivated to succeed. They make good progress in lessons because they listen attentively and persevere with challenging tasks. This helps them to achieve examination results that are above average in many subjects. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grade C and above, including English and mathematics, has been significantly higher than average for the last three years. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and enjoy their learning. They are supported effectively in lessons by teaching assistants. Their needs are also very well provided for through adaptations to the curriculum, enabling them to pursue projects that capture their interest as well as successfully promoting their key skills.

Students enthusiastically participate in all aspects of school life. They respond well to the school's health promotion strategies and develop a good understanding of personal health and safety. They make an excellent contribution to the school and the wider community. Older students provide excellent role models and support for Year 7 students through the 'Guardian Angel' system and as prefects. Younger students enjoy taking responsibility as form representatives and in various fund-raising activities. The student council and regular surveys of students' views provide effective forums for students to contribute to decisions about the running of the school. Students' charity work, community-based volunteering and participation in local events are highly valued in the local community.

Students' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is very effectively developed through the curriculum and integrated into all aspects of the school. Students have a keen sense of social justice and show an excellent understanding of ethical issues and consideration for the cultural traditions and beliefs of others. Their enjoyment and full engagement with the school is reflected in their high levels of attendance, good punctuality and participation in extra-curricular activities. Their high levels of achievement in English, mathematics and information and communication technology, together with excellent social skills, prepares them very effectively for the next stage of their education and employment. Consequently, virtually all students go on to further education or to employment with training.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good, there is some that is outstanding and none that is inadequate. Good lessons are underpinned by the teachers' strong subject knowledge, good quality questioning and a range of interesting activities. Students generally make good progress in lessons, but there are a few, less-effective lessons that do not take sufficient account of students' prior learning to provide challenging tasks for all students. Consequently, some students do not make the best possible progress. The use of assessment is good overall so that students have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they can do to improve their work. However, the most effective practice is not yet embedded across all subjects. Students' behaviour and constructive relationships make a strong contribution to their good progress.

The curriculum provides an excellent range of academic and vocational courses and enrichment through extra-curricular activities. It meets the needs of individuals exceptionally well through personalised pathways. The cross-curricular provision to develop thinking and basic skills thoroughly prepares students for life after school. Year 10 students are rightly proud of the work they have done through their Foundation Learning course to refurbish the school chapel. They have made an important contribution to the school and learnt many work-related skills in the process. The school is leading the Level 2 Engineering Diploma in partnership with other high schools and the local post-16 college.

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The course is effectively enhanced by the use of the virtual learning environment which enables students to investigate and experiment at home, and gives them feedback on their work. This effective practice is being developed to enhance learning in other subjects.

Students make good gains in their personal development because they receive good care, guidance and support. Effective pastoral arrangements ensure that students feel extremely safe and know who to speak to if they have a problem. As a result of the whole school emphasis on individualised support, attendance has improved significantly and the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions has reduced. This work has been enhanced by the recently appointed family support worker and attendance improvement worker, who have successfully engaged with families. The quality of care and support is further enhanced by the school's productive links with external agencies and links with primary schools to support smooth transition. Students receive good advice for career development and options in Years 9, 10 and 11. The school is currently seeking to extend careers guidance into Years 7 and 8.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team provide clear direction based on high expectations for all students and in depth knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Accurate self-evaluation is based on rigorous monitoring and tracking of students' progress at all levels. Subject leaders play a full part in departmental monitoring and improvement planning. Staff are highly committed to improving their own practice and developing professionally. Many have participated in research based projects through the Teacher Learning Academy and all have taken full advantage of training opportunities to develop their practice. Their commitment to self improvement is reflected in the good quality teaching and care which promotes students' good achievement and exceptionally high outcomes in some areas.

The governing body is knowledgeable and well organised with a good understanding of the school's performance. Governors make a good contribution to school development planning through various committees and are currently developing their role in departmental scrutiny. Safeguarding procedures meet all government requirements and staff have undertaken relevant training. There are aspects of recording that do not demonstrate good administrative practice but they meet all requirements to keep students safe. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities and provide good care and support. Good liaison with other key agencies effectively reduces the risk of harm to students. The

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school makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion through its strong partnership working in the local community. Its links with schools with more culturally diverse populations further afield enhance students' understanding of difference and diversity. Equality of opportunity is promoted well in all areas of the school's work. Students who are under achieving or who are at risk of exclusion are very well supported. The personalised curriculum enables students of different ability to make good progress so that the attainment gap between different groups is closing.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires are happy with their children's experience of school and almost all feel that the school keeps their children safe. They feel that teaching is good and express high levels of confidence in the school's leaders. A number of positive comments were made about the quality of care and students' progress, stating that, 'The school is exceptionally quick to respond to concerns.' and 'The excellent teaching and support has enabled my child to excel and achieve highly.' Criticisms by very few parents and carers included the school's communication of course content, quantity of physical education, management of behaviour of a few individuals and support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Leyland St Mary's Catholic Technology 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 297 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 774 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	112	38	167	56	12	4	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	126	42	163	55	2	1	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	144	48	139	47	10	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	122	41	156	53	13	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	115	39	165	56	8	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	85	29	172	58	29	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	71	24	195	66	24	8	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)	110	37	170	57	11	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	105	35	169	57	13	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	101	34	168	57	15	5	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	22	200	67	14	5	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	137	46	145	49	9	3	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	144	48	135	45	8	3	4	1

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 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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



9 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Technology College, Leyland, PR25 1BS

Thank you for your helpful contribution to the inspection and for your warm welcome. We enjoyed hearing your views and reading your questionnaires.

We found St Mary's to be a good school with some outstanding features and excellent capacity for further sustained improvement.

Your school is an extremely warm and welcoming community. You make an excellent contribution by taking on positions of responsibility and contributing your ideas to improve the school. Your good behaviour and the good care and support from your teachers help everyone in the school to feel extremely safe. You have an excellent understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.

We found that the curriculum provides an excellent range of experiences and good teaching maintains your interest in lessons. Your enjoyment of school is reflected in your high levels of attendance and full participation in school life. You make good progress to achieve above-average standards in most subjects and very high standards in English, mathematics and the school's specialist technology subjects. These, together with your excellent social skills, prepare you extremely well for the next phase of your education.

School leaders are providing a very clear direction for the school and staff are fully committed to help you achieve the best that you can. We have agreed a few areas for improvement with school leaders to sustain your high levels of attainment in core subjects and raise achievement further in other subjects. These are:

- spreading the most effective practice in assessment across all subjects
- using assessment information to plan challenging activities in all lessons so that all students make good progress
- promoting your independent learning in lessons and through home learning.

We would like to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jean Kendall

Her Majesty's Inspector, on behalf of the inspection team

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