

St Wilfrid's CofE High School and Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119815
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	358633
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Shirley Gornall 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1563
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Inglis
Headteacher	Mr David Whyte
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2008
School address	Duckworth Street Blackburn Lancashire BB2 2JR
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 47 lessons taught by 46 teachers and held meetings with staff, students, the acting Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documents including planning, assessment records, students' work, monitoring reports and the school's self-evaluation. They analysed 186 questionnaires received from parents and carers, 79 from staff and 155 from students.

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

- The effectiveness of the school's new leadership structure in raising achievement and improving provision
- The impact of care, guidance and support on improving students' outcomes
- The extent to which students entering the school with low prior attainment make progress, particularly in developing literacy skills.

Information about the school

St Wilfrid's Church of England High School and Technology College is much larger than the average-sized high school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average but rising. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is higher than average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower than average, although a higher than average proportion have statements of special educational needs. The school has been a specialist technology college since September 1997 and was designated as a training school in 2009. It has received numerous awards including the Quality in Study Support award and the Investing in Community Engagement award from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. The school provides specialist support for students with hearing impairment from across the local authority.

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

2

Main findings

St Wilfrid's is a good and improving school. Under the committed and principled leadership of the headteacher, outcomes have improved since the previous inspection. Students enjoy all the school has to offer and their achievement is outstanding. Attainment at GCSE level is consistently well above the national average and most students make good progress from their starting points, which have been above average in recent years but are now broadly similar to those found nationally. The school's palpable Christian ethos underpins its work as an inclusive, harmonious community where all students are treated as unique individuals. Students behave outstandingly well, demonstrating compassionate, courteous and caring attitudes, keenness to learn and a strong sense of pride in their school. Their spiritual development is exemplary and they make an excellent contribution to their school and to the wider community through a range of activities, including those they initiate for themselves. Attendance at school is consistently high.

The quality of teaching is good overall, with some that is satisfactory and a small proportion that is outstanding. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and most lessons are enjoyable and stimulating. On some occasions, however, there is insufficient opportunity for students to learn actively by engaging in a range of activities or to develop their thinking by giving extended spoken explanations. There is variability in the effectiveness of teachers' deployment of support assistants and in the setting of homework. Outstanding care, guidance and support, including that provided through partnership with a wide variety of agencies, contribute greatly to students' happiness, security, self-esteem and good progress.

The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body articulate a clear vision that drives decision-making. They have brought about well-considered changes to the management and organisation of the school which have built good capacity for sustained improvement. There is a strong commitment among leaders at all levels to secure the best possible outcomes for students. The role of middle leaders in contributing to the school's accurate and insightful self-evaluation has been strengthened so that there is a shared view of priorities, targets and strategies for their realisation. The school has developed robust mechanisms for sharing good practice in teaching and learning, although the full impact of this work is not yet evident in all classrooms.

The sixth form is a significant strength of the school. The vast majority of students complete their courses, achieve well and progress to further or higher education. Their personal development is excellent and they are valuable role models for the rest of the school. Their contribution to the running of the school is impressive. Leadership of the sixth form, characterised by thorough self-evaluation and highly-effective planning to meet the changing needs of students, is outstanding.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or outstanding by:
 - celebrating, and systematically sharing, good practice that exists within school
 - encouraging creativity in lesson design to promote active, independent and collaborative learning
 - providing regular opportunities for students to give full explanations of the reasons for their answers to teachers' questions
 - ensuring that the needs of all students are recognised and met, including through teachers' effective management of support staff to boost the independence and progress of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that homework is designed to extend learning and is consistently set.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students relish the opportunities provided by the school and achieve outstanding outcomes. Attainment is consistently well above national averages in the majority of subjects. The proportion of students attaining the highest grades at GCSE has risen since the previous inspection. Most students make good progress from their starting points, especially in physical education, geography, history, home economics and modern foreign languages. Progress rates in both English and mathematics are consistently good. Students report that they enjoy their learning, particularly when they are challenged to work independently, collaboratively and creatively. School data and lesson observations confirm that most students make good progress in lessons and that there is little variation in the rate of progress made by students from different ethnic groups or with different levels of prior attainment. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, particularly when they receive well-targeted support.

Students behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the site. They are courteous, polite and sociable, arriving punctually to lessons and demonstrating high levels of diligent concentration. When working in groups, they give feedback on each other's ideas or performance in a sensitive, constructive way. They report confidently that any incidents of inappropriate behaviour or bullying are dealt with immediately and effectively. The number of students excluded from school is extremely low. Students feel safe in school and take responsibility for their own and each other's well-being.

During their time at St Wilfrid's, students develop attitudes and skills that equip them well for the world of work or continuing education. Their attendance levels are high and very few students are persistently absent. No student leaves school without a place in education, training or employment. Students take on a variety of roles within their community including as mentors, team leaders and representatives on the school's various councils. Decisions they take influence the running of the school. They develop good skills with regard to personal organisation, and their numeracy, literacy and information technology skills are secure, although sometimes limited opportunities in lessons for collaborative work mean that their skills in leadership and oral presentation are not consistently developed. Students' spiritual development is exemplary; they exhibit curiosity and are keen to explore other faiths. Their enthusiastic singing during assembly is particularly moving. They show mature awareness of moral issues and have strong ethical

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frameworks for decision-making. Through initiatives such as the school's "east meets west" programme, complemented by arts-based projects, students gain understanding and awareness of different cultures, enabling them to function within an inclusive and harmonious school community.

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	1
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	2
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	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?

The quality of teaching is good overall, with a small amount that is outstanding and some that is satisfactory. Relationships between staff and students are extremely positive. The best lessons are characterised by lively, engaging teaching which challenges students to extend their thinking and achieve their personal best. For example, in a highly-effective mathematics lesson, students worked collaboratively to find equivalent percentages and fractions while reflecting on their team-working skills. They made outstanding progress in response to the teacher's skilful planning and excellent subject knowledge. Similarly, outstanding progress was observed in several physical education lessons where excellent assessment enabled teachers to set specific targets for students to analyse and improve their performance. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities was boosted in one of these lessons by the teacher's insightful deployment of a highly-skilled teaching assistant. Excellent dialogue was observed in geography lessons in which teachers took account of students' prior assessment outcomes when planning to extend their learning. However, in some lessons learning is passive, with limited

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opportunities for students to discuss their ideas with peers, present extended answers or learn in different ways. There is inconsistency in teachers' planning to make the best use of support assistants to meet the needs of students. Across the school, there is variability in the use of homework to extend students' thinking and embed learning. There were few opportunities observed in lessons for students to make interactive use of information and communication technology to develop or express their ideas.

Most students know their targets and understand their next steps towards achieving them. Teachers' marking is generally good, although some examples of perfunctory assessment persist. Students respond well when encouraged to assess their own or their peers' work. In English, exemplary self-assessment underpinned an outstanding lesson where students were encouraged to evaluate their own reading skills in depth. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of students. The school's specialism is apparent in the enhanced range of science and technology courses available and features in the broad programme of extra-curricular activities. The school has recognised that an increasing proportion of younger students require additional support in developing their literacy skills and has modified the curriculum accordingly. Appropriate plans are in place to develop skills-based work more fully.

Students agree that the quality of care, guidance and support they receive is a major strength, commenting in discussion that 'there is always someone to listen to you and help you – no matter what the problem is.' They are very appreciative of the outstanding support they receive at transition points from primary school and leading to sixth form, college or the world of work. Students value the way in which pastoral support is organised and state that the interest and responsiveness shown by pastoral staff contribute significantly to their sense of well-being. Students who are identified as vulnerable and those with hearing impairment are exceptionally well supported and nurtured so that they can enjoy all aspects of school life.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's mission and values are powerfully articulated by the headteacher and senior leaders and are subscribed to by staff and students. Weaknesses have been tenaciously tackled in a principled way and the school has been successful in raising aspirations and engaging partners, parents and carers in its development activities. The school's leadership arrangements have been remodelled since the previous inspection. A new structure has been introduced which is designed to enhance communication, enable the sharing of good practice and strengthen the management processes of middle leaders.

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Early indications suggest that these intended improvements are happening, although the impact of the school's drive for consistently excellent teaching and learning is not evident in all classrooms. The school sets itself ambitious targets and its reinvigorated monitoring and intervention activity mean that these are increasingly on course to be met. Self-evaluation is accurate; its development has been effectively supported by local authority advisers and has been translated into effective planning. The governing body discharges its duties effectively and efficiently, providing support and challenge to senior leaders and demonstrating a clear understanding of priorities. Safeguarding is exemplary, with particularly impressive levels of training and guidance and a shared belief that it is everyone's responsibility. The school has an excellent understanding of the context of its own community and through a variety of activities has built harmonious and productive relationships within the locality as well as nationally and internationally. Students are adamant that equality of opportunity is promoted at all levels and that harassment of any form is not tolerated. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of students. The school demonstrates good capacity to maintain its improvement trajectory.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
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

Students in the sixth form make good progress and attain above-average standards, with particular strengths in modern foreign languages, humanities subjects and fine art. The proportion of students attaining the highest grades at A level has increased significantly since the previous inspection. The overwhelming majority of students complete their courses and there is a very high level of progression to university. The personal development of sixth form students is excellent and they make a valuable contribution to the school by taking on a wide range of responsibilities and acting as positive role models. Teaching in the sixth form is good, although in some lessons opportunities for active,

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collaborative learning are missed. The curriculum offers a range of courses to meet students' needs and there is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities in which students participate enthusiastically. Care, guidance and support offered to sixth-form students are highly personalised and students affirm that it is consistently outstanding. Excellent leadership has resulted in insightful self-evaluation, leading to rigorous, targeted action that has raised standards.

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	1

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who completed questionnaires was much lower than average. The large majority of those who responded say that they are happy with their children's experience at school. They are pleased with the quality of teaching and care their children receive and feel that the school is well led. One commented, 'I cannot speak highly enough of the school and particularly about the efforts staff make so that children settle in well when they arrive from primary school.' This view was echoed by other parents and carers. A very small minority feels that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors took particular note of this view in observing behaviour in lessons and around the school building and in reading the school's records. They found behaviour to be outstanding and its management to be effective. A few parents and carers expressed concern about the quantity and quality of homework that their children receive. Inspectors discussed homework with students and observed its use. They concluded that there is variability in the amount of homework received by different groups and in its effectiveness in promoting independent learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Wilfrid's CoFE High School and 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 186 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1563 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	36	103	55	13	7	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	79	42	102	55	3	2	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	67	36	97	52	12	6	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	62	33	100	54	16	9	4	2
The teaching is good at this school	50	27	115	62	14	8	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	24	105	56	23	12	6	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	24	109	59	25	13	1	1
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)	62	33	103	55	8	4	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	30	112	60	9	5	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	32	95	51	21	11	7	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	21	111	60	17	9	9	5
The school is led and managed effectively	77	41	89	48	10	5	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	77	41	89	48	13	7	3	2

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.



13 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Wilfrid's C of E High School and Technology College, Blackburn, BB2 2JR

Thank you for the very warm and courteous welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We were extremely impressed by your sensible and caring behaviour and the great pride you rightly take in your school. Thank you to those of you who gave up time to speak to us and those who completed the questionnaire. We agree with you that your leaders and teachers provide you with an exceptionally high standard of care, guidance and support. Many of you willingly take on responsibilities and make a major contribution, through your harmonious relationships and mature attitudes, to the very positive way in which the school is regarded by your local community.

The inspection team considers St Wilfrid's to be a good school. It provides you with a good standard of education and most of you make good progress, leading to high standards of achievement. Aspects of the school's work are outstanding, including the way in which it supports your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and its arrangements for keeping you safe.

During the inspection we held discussions with leaders, teachers, the acting Chair of the Governing Body and you about how St Wilfrid's can improve further. We have asked the school to increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching you receive. In some lessons we saw that you made outstanding progress in response to activities that challenged you to think creatively and explore ideas. On other occasions you were more passive and your progress slowed. Your teachers already work extremely hard. You can help them to make lessons even better by letting them know the sorts of activity that really help you think and learn best.

Please continue to support the school as enthusiastically as you do. On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Shirley Gornall

Her Majesty's Inspector

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