

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic VA School - A Specialist Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111763
Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	378356
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Ann Ashdown

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	744
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joan Gillis
Headteacher	Pat Hibbert
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons and saw 33 teachers teach. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at students' books, safeguarding information, students' progress data and other documentation. They analysed 196 questionnaires from parents and carers and also those from students and staff.

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

- The features of the students' personal development, the curriculum, care, guidance and support and leadership and management which support the school's evaluation of them as outstanding.
- Whether all groups of students are making at least good progress in all subjects.
- The effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve teaching and learning and assessment further and reduce variations in quality between subjects.

Information about the school

This is a below average-sized secondary school which has specialist status for science. A below average proportion of students is known to be eligible for free school meals. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is below average as is that of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with that usually found. The school has gained several awards including Silver Artsmark and holds Healthy School and Silver International School status.

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 where all groups of students make good progress. Attainment is high and achievement is outstanding. The excellent leadership of the headteacher and members of the governing body, fully supported by all staff, has been instrumental in moving the school forward. Since the previous inspection attainment has risen, students' progress has accelerated and there has been a relentless and successful focus on further improving teaching and learning. Governors, leaders and managers all know the school exceptionally well. They have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have sharply identified areas for improvement. This highly accurate self-evaluation and continuous drive for even better achievement mean the school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

Students are very appreciative of the outstanding care, guidance and support which the school provides and which contribute so well to their excellent personal development. Students' behaviour is exemplary and their attendance is high. They have an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe and their spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness is highly developed. Students very willingly take on responsibilities and make an excellent contribution to the community. This, combined with their high level of academic and personal skills, means they are extremely well equipped for the next stage of their education and for future life.

Students make good progress because the teaching they receive is good. Although there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment between departments, lessons are never less than satisfactory and some are outstanding. Most lessons are fast paced and challenging, activities are varied and well matched to students' needs and teaching is lively and knowledgeable. In a few lessons and subject areas students' progress is slightly slower because the quality of marking and feedback to them is not as high and teachers questioning in lessons is less effective. The school's excellent monitoring of teaching and learning ensures that any areas where students' progress is slower are quickly identified and constructive, expert help brings about improvement.

At Sacred Heart the skills and talents of all students and staff are highly valued and all have excellent equal opportunities to succeed in a completely safe and caring environment. Outstanding work with a range of partners and the positive impact of

the school’s specialist science status both contribute very well to the extremely rich and varied curriculum which students follow.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce inconsistencies between departments in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring marking and feedback in all subjects are of equally high quality and help students to improve their work
 - improving teachers’ questioning in lessons so that it is used consistently in all subjects to check students’ learning, reshape their future work and promote even faster progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In lessons, students work extremely hard and are very keen to succeed. Consequently, achievement is outstanding. For example, in an English lesson students made particularly good progress and really enjoyed learning as they used a range of sophisticated adjectives to add suspense and tension to their writing. Work in students’ books and the school’s excellent monitoring system both confirm that current students are on track to attain highly and reach their challenging targets. From above average starting points when they enter the school all groups of students make good progress, so attainment is high when they leave Year 11. Results in GCSE examinations have been significantly above average for the last three years. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from very timely and well-targeted intervention in their learning to ensure they are given the extra help they need and make the same good progress as their peers.

An atmosphere of trust and respect pervades the school. Students’ high attendance is a reflection of their enjoyment of all that the school has to offer. They feel that their voice is clearly heard through the school council and that they are completely involved in contributing to their own school and the wider community. For example, at a recent open evening over a third of students voluntarily stayed at school to help with the event even though many had a long journey home afterwards. Students work particularly well in teams, have a highly developed awareness of the needs of others and hence are very well placed to become extremely responsible citizens.

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	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1

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

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is always at least satisfactory and in some lessons students make particularly rapid progress when teaching is outstanding. Teachers are extremely knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects and use a wide range of resources and teaching methods to engage the interest of their students. Topical and relevant material as varied as video footage of the Olympic games, an image of Lady Gaga and an advertisement for a mobile phone all captured students' interest and enabled them to extend their literacy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills particularly well. In most subjects, students have a good understanding of how to improve their work because books are marked regularly and feedback is very helpful in guiding them towards improving their work. Assessment practice in the English department is exemplary. There are some inconsistencies across the school in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment but the school is quickly narrowing this gap by coaching, mentoring and sharing good practice between and within subject departments.

The curriculum provides students with an excellent choice of courses and a range of memorable experiences. Through its very strong and productive partnerships with other schools, students can choose from a wide range of academic and vocational courses which are very well matched to their needs. A host of trips, events and extra-curricular activities further enrich the curriculum and add to students' enjoyment of learning. Visits to places as close at hand as Whitby and as far away as Iceland and Ghana all contribute to students' outstanding academic achievement and personal development.

Providing outstanding care, guidance and support is central to the school's work. Students are exceptionally well known as individuals and receive very focused help when this is needed. Excellent use is made of a range of specialist agencies to support those students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Many parents and carers remark how well and quickly their children have settled into the school which is testament to the school's excellent induction procedures.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Members of the governing body, the headteacher and leaders and managers at all levels share an extremely clear vision for further school improvement. The school is not complacent and continually strives to improve already outstanding outcomes for students even further. Governance is outstanding. Members of the governing body are fully involved in determining the strategic direction of the school and monitor its work assiduously. Morale at Sacred Heart school is high because both students and staff feel valued and that they all have excellent and equal opportunities to succeed. Safeguarding procedures are exemplary. Staff and members of the governing body are extremely well trained and knowledgeable about issues relating to child protection and risk assessment, and the recording of safeguarding information is meticulous. The school engages well with parents and carers and they receive regular information to help them support their children’s learning. However, the school recognises this as an area of their work which can be improved further by making greater use of ICT. The school has forged highly productive partnerships with a wide range of schools, colleges and businesses which all help to both broaden and enrich the curriculum. The school promotes community cohesion particularly well at both local and national levels. It has plans in place to provide students with further opportunities to engage with communities which differ from their own within the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for the 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	1
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are entirely happy with the education the school provides. They particularly appreciate the way in which the school keeps their children safe, meets their needs and enables them to make good progress and reach high standards. Inspection evidence entirely supports these views. A few parents and carers commented that the school did not communicate with them sufficiently well to help them support their child’s learning. Inspectors found the school’s engagement with parents and carers to be good, although they, and the school, recognise that this is an area which can be improved further.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic VA School - A Specialist Science 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 196 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 744 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	73	37	101	52	11	6	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	88	45	93	48	3	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	83	43	86	44	12	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	76	39	102	52	7	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	74	38	99	51	8	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	28	105	54	21	11	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	27	117	60	15	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)	80	41	91	47	9	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	76	39	98	50	9	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	74	38	92	47	11	6	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	28	97	50	15	8	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	78	40	87	45	12	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	98	50	80	41	9	5	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



5 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic VA School - A Specialist Science College, Redcar, TS10 1PJ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school this week. We are particularly grateful to those of you who gave up your time to discuss with us your experience at school. Please thank your parents and carers for filling in our questionnaire.

This is what we have said about your school in our report.

- Yours is an outstanding school where teaching and learning are good, you make good progress, your attainment is high and your achievement is outstanding.
- The care, guidance and support you receive, the curriculum you follow and the way your school is led and managed are all outstanding.
- Many aspects of your personal development, including your behaviour, are outstanding and, consequently, you are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of your education and for future work.

This is what we have asked the staff to do in order to improve your school further.

- Reduce inconsistencies between departments in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring the marking of your work and the feedback you receive are of equally high quality in all subjects and help you to improve your work
 - improving teachers' questioning in lessons in order to check your learning and reshape your future work so that you make equally good progress in all subjects.

You can all help your school to maintain its outstanding effectiveness by continuing to work with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Ann Ashdown
Lead inspector

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