

# St Mary's Catholic College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119778
<b>Local authority</b>	Blackpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	379887
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sally Kenyon HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,196
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	164
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Barry Leyland
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephen Tierney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	01 October 2008
<b>School address</b>	St Walburga's Road Blackpool FY3 7EQ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 41 teachers in 41 lessons and visited a further 10 lessons through learning walks. Meetings were held with leaders at all levels, members of the governing body and groups of students. They observed the school's work, scrutinised books and safeguarding records, looked at documentation and considered the views of parents and carers through 417 questionnaires.

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

- Achievement in mathematics.
- Progress of the most able students to check that there is sufficient challenge in their learning.
- Effectiveness of the sixth form in meeting the needs of all students.
- Quality of monitoring, evaluation and planning to secure improvements.

## Information about the school

St Mary's Catholic College is a larger than average 11-18 school. It is a specialist mathematics and computing college. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, as is the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school is a Leadership and Innovation Academy Hub for the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, holds the national Healthy School status and has Microsoft Academy status. It is a Building Schools for the Future sample school and a National College for School Leadership National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) Leadership Development School.

**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 Mary's Catholic College is a good school where the promotion of Catholic values is paramount, as one parent commented 'the vibrant social, charity and religious part of the school illuminates every aspect of school life.'

Many aspects of the school's work are outstanding; primarily, the care, guidance and support that students receive and their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Additional outstanding features include the way in which the school uses partnerships to promote learning and well-being for a diverse group of students' needs, the extent to which students feel safe and their contribution to the school and wider community.

Students make good progress from their broadly average starting points. The school has had some significant issues historically with the stability of staffing in mathematics. These are now resolved and staffing has been stable for the last two years. However, this has affected attainment in mathematics which has been significantly lower than other subjects in the school. Progress has improved at Key Stage 3 as a result of some 1:1 coaching, and the very large majority of teaching seen in mathematics during the inspection was good. The school's historically accurate tracking predicts that the mathematics results for 2012 will be broadly average. Accelerating progress in mathematics remains the priority area for development within the school.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. This is partly due to the targeted care and support that individuals receive from the supportive teams of chaplains and inclusion staff who work with form tutors. Their focus is upon removing barriers to learning and they are highly effective. They include a police community safety officer, family liaison worker, a youth worker and members of the senior leadership team.

Teaching overall is good, and inspectors observed some outstanding practice. In the best lessons, teachers use suitably challenging and engaging activities linked to the varying abilities within the group. These lessons have clear pace and purpose and students are able to link new learning to sound prior knowledge. Their work is clearly marked to identify the strengths and gives very clear detailed feedback on how learning can be further progressed. In lessons where progress is slower, not enough emphasis is given to the ongoing assessment of progress both in the lesson and in

work books. While marking may indicate the quality of the work, it does not give specific, high quality feedback on how to improve. Moreover, not enough emphasis is given to students' prior attainment data to inform the planning of learning activities. This means that these activities are not always matched well to students' abilities.

The school is only a few weeks into a new curriculum based upon three learning sessions per day and aimed at promoting the 'transforming learning' agenda. The information and communication technology (ICT) aspect of the school's specialism has had a key impact on creating engaging and stimulating opportunities for learning. This was seen through students' use of learning tablets in lessons and highly effective use of cross-curricular ICT.

The headteacher and his team have managed to maintain high standards in achievement while driving forward a new build on the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in less time than some other schools have had. During this phase, attendance has improved significantly and persistent absence has more than halved. These factors contribute to the school demonstrating good capacity for further improvement. Leaders at all levels have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses; however, systems for ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review are more refined in some areas than others. For example, the school's extensive work on community cohesion is evaluated through various different strands of the development plan but opportunities are missed to pull these findings together to have even greater impact. In addition, the monitoring of the quality of marking is based primarily at departmental level but senior leaders have yet to refine their systems for checking the quality of monitoring to provide greater consistency and even better quality feedback for students.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to accelerate achievement, particularly in mathematics, by:
  - embedding the use of prior attainment data to inform lesson planning
  - ensuring that students consistently receive high quality written feedback on how to improve their work
  - further refining systems for ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2
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Attainment is above average, students make good progress in lessons and achieve well over time. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make exceptional progress due to the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive. Outstanding progress was seen in a Year 10 business studies lesson where students were completing a SWOT analysis for a business of their choice. Students exhibited outstanding behaviour because they managed their own learning and were able to independently progress by challenging each other in their thinking. The teacher acted as a facilitator, picking out students to assess independently their learning and correct any emerging misconceptions. Aspirational targets are set and students closely tracked to identify underachievement. The school uses a range of intervention strategies to target students at risk of underachievement, including inviting parents and carers in to complete coursework with them.

The overwhelming majority of students report that they feel safe in school and would have a number of adults to turn to should they experience any problems. Inspectors observed students being polite and considerate in classes and around the school. They have coped well with the great disruption to their normal routines caused by the new build and the temporarily limited recreational space. There is a clear system for rewards and sanctions, which were both observed being effectively used by staff.

Students adopt healthy lifestyles well and many take part in extra-curricular sporting activities. Attendance is above average due to a concerted effort since the previous inspection. The extensive inclusion team monitor individuals and groups of students to ensure that where there is any variation in attendance they take necessary steps to close the gaps. They are well prepared for their next steps and almost all students go on to further education, employment or training.

Students make an outstanding contribution to their school and the wider community through the vast array of projects to which they commit. They have raised over £3000 since September 2011 to help a local special school, they collect food for 'Street Life' to help the homeless, and they invite more senior members of the local community in to watch high quality theatrical and musical performances. The 'Activate' group have achieved the Bronze ECO Schools Award and are now working towards the next level. Initiatives such as these contribute to the outstanding social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Many students take the opportunity to contribute to the St Vincent de Paul society and CAFOD, raising money and taking part in activities to help others. The Year 7 nurture group were observed studying Diwali and in a Year 10 religious studies lesson discussed the sanctity of marriage. In these lessons, students showed a deep consideration for other people's values and an ability to relate these to their own beliefs. Registration time is used for prayers and personal reflection.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup>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 and the use of assessment to support learning satisfactory. Although some good examples of assessment were seen, data indicating students' current and prior abilities are not yet used consistently across all lessons. Much of the time, lessons have clearly focused learning objectives and outcomes and in some lessons these were linked to very specific levelled assessment criteria. When used well, this provided considerable intellectual challenge, particularly for the ablest pupils. However, a minority of lessons do not yet exploit the data sufficiently to inform their planning. These lesson activities are not challenging enough for some students to make the best possible progress, and the least able cannot complete the tasks set for them.

The curriculum is good and offers a variety of pathways for students to access including vocational elements. Excellent use is made of ICT across many subjects and many students access their online learning from home. As one parent commented, 'the personal revision plan is a wonderful tool, enabling parents to support their children and making revision more manageable'. Extra-curricular activities, include TOG on Fridays in the Chapel 'a chance to chill and spend time with God', YU-GI-OH and Warhammer club.

The Positive Intervention or PIT Stop team are central to support for all students and works closely with the chaplaincy team, form tutors and a wealth of agencies. There is a very effective rewards system which results in merits, lunch fast passes, attendance vouchers, online educational games, reward trips and certificates in assembly for the lower school. Key Stage 4 and above receive postcards of praise and letters of commendation to parents and carers. There are very strong transition arrangements from primary schools and a prominent anti-bullying STOP campaign developed by the school council.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher clearly has the overwhelming support of parents, carers, staff and students surveyed during the inspection; his vision to transform learning has seen outcomes improve significantly since the previous inspection. Much of the school's professional development programme has been rightly focusing upon assessment to support learning, with the biggest impact so far being felt in the quality of sixth form teaching. The school has invested heavily in leadership training and development at all levels. Senior leaders have a strong vision to transform learning ready for the new building and the opportunities the creative space will afford. The first steps have been taken towards this with the new three-period timetable. While there are clear benefits of this, particularly seen in sixth form teaching, the school is aware of the

need to closely monitor progress across all year groups and subjects to evaluate the suitability of the new longer lessons. There is an appropriate emphasis on coaching and ‘Innovation Fellows’, research and to trial new approaches to learning.

The school has an immense range of partnerships to support students’ learning and well-being. They incorporate work with primary schools, the chaplaincy team and the local college. The inclusion teams coordinate a range of services to support students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and the impact of their work has been pivotal in improving outcomes for all students.

Community cohesion is good. Students come to St Mary’s from a great variety of backgrounds and get along well. They are aware of and get actively involved in their local, national and global communities. Last summer a group of students went to teach in a school in Nepal, closer to home the school’s jazz group are planning their next concert for local residents. The school engages well with parents and carers and this was corroborated by the large majority who responded to the survey. However, a small minority of parents and carers commented that, on occasion, they had to wait some time for a response about issues concerning their child.

The governing body is highly committed to, and supportive of, the school. This is proven through members’ unswerving focus on meeting the sometimes extremely challenging deadlines posed by the BSF project. They have presentations from leaders at all levels to their meetings but are not yet fully involved in whole-school self-evaluation.

Safeguarding arrangements are good, with clear policies and procedures in place. The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination well, resulting in all groups in school making at least good progress. The school provides good value for money.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

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



## Sixth form

There is a clear vision for its future and work to improve the quality of teaching has had a very positive impact. The number of students continuing from AS to A2 level has improved considerably over the past two years and overall numbers of students entering the sixth form have also risen.

Achievement is good. Students are set challenging targets based on their Key Stage 4 attainment and their progress is now rigorously tracked. Students were observed making good progress in lessons due to consistently high quality teaching. Teaching is good overall with some outstanding practice seen. For example, in a Year 13 music lesson about harmonies, outstanding progress was made due to the excellent subject knowledge of the teacher and the ability to clearly demonstrate key learning points using a piano. The high quality dialogue promoted a greater preparedness to learn new and challenging concepts in a supportive and stimulating environment. Students are keen to discuss their future options post sixth form and enjoy the Wednesday 'enrichment' afternoons when they may partake in any number of worthwhile activities, from football to serving soup at the Salvation Army base.

### *These are the grades for the sixth form*

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

## Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the survey felt that the school is well led and managed. Almost all who responded considered their child to be safe at school. Likewise, most who responded felt that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns and that teaching is good. A few parents and carers expressed concerns regarding behaviour, homework, and communication from the school. All of these concerns were followed up with the school by the inspection team. The school accepted comments about the timeliness of responding to issues raised by parents and carers and has plans in place to improve this. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the survey feel that behaviour is effectively dealt with and good behaviour was observed around the school. Different online learning opportunities are offered for homework and some parents and carers expressed their appreciation of these initiatives.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Catholic 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 417 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,196 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	167	40	228	55	15	4	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	191	46	217	52	4	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	152	36	230	55	28	7	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	164	39	215	52	22	5	2	0
The teaching is good at this school	171	41	227	54	9	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	144	35	226	54	34	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	110	26	258	62	33	8	4	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)	153	37	223	53	11	3	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	149	36	238	57	19	5	2	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	158	38	221	53	24	6	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	110	26	243	58	35	8	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	175	42	225	54	6	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	198	47	201	48	12	3	1	0

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

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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 is 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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



18 November 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of St Mary's Catholic College, Blackpool, FY3 7EQ**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We took into account what you told us through the questionnaires. We also reflected upon the opinions and information you gave us at the student meetings, and from discussions with inspectors in lessons and around the school. We were most impressed by the contribution you make to the community through your charitable work and the care, guidance and support the school provides for you. We found you to be polite and eager to learn, and your behaviour was generally good in lessons and around the school.

To summarise, we found that:

- your achievement is good due to the good teaching you receive and the outstanding care, guidance and support
- you make an outstanding contribution to your school and wider community
- you have very strong social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects to your learning
- your achievement in mathematics is not as strong as in other subjects.

We have asked the school to further improve your achievement by ensuring that all work is designed to be suitably challenging for you to make the best possible progress in every lesson. We have also asked that teachers give you detailed feedback on your work for every lesson so you know what you need to do to improve. Finally, we have asked the leaders in your school to ensure that, amongst everything else, all of these things are checked regularly so that you can make even better progress.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Kenyon  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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