

St John Payne Catholic Comprehensive School, Chelmsford

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115238
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	379044
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Stephen Abbott 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	1142
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alistair Whipps
Headteacher	Antony Schular
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2008
School address	Patching Hall Lane Chelmsford CM1 4BS
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

This inspection was carried by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation, including: the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation documents; various policies; the incident log; behaviour management records; information about students' participation in extra-curricular activities; risk assessments; and the single central register of safeguarding checks. They observed 42 lessons taught by 42 different teachers and made short visits to several other lessons to check on marking, lesson planning and the quality of support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The inspection team also analysed questionnaire responses from 416 parents and carers, 171 students and 62 members of staff.

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

- To what extent are students making sufficient progress in English?
- How well has the school identified and tackled the issues that caused some groups in 2010 to show slower than expected progress?
- Which aspects of provision explain the areas of recent underperformance, and to what extent have the issues been rectified?
- To what extent have leaders and managers been successful in closing gaps in performance between groups and tackling underperformance in English?
- In ensuring students' safety, how successfully does the school mitigate the impact of the problems presented by the site layout?

Information about the school

The St John Payne Catholic Comprehensive School is a larger-than-average school serving the Mid-Essex Deanery of the Diocese of Brentwood. It therefore takes students from a wide catchment area. It is a specialist technology and leadership partner school. Several minority ethnic groups are represented in the school, but most of the students are White British. Boys outnumber girls in each year group. A small minority of students speak English as an additional language, but few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is very low.

The school has Investors in People status, and the Financial Management Standards in Schools award. The school's religious character is subject to a separate inspection.

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 John Payne Catholic Comprehensive School is a good school with an outstandingly effective sixth form. It provides a largely academic curriculum that meets the needs of most students well. A large majority of lessons are well taught and teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Students achieve well because their academic progress is closely monitored and any who fall behind are provided with extra support.

Outcomes for sixth formers are outstanding. The school places a high priority on preparing students to play a full and useful role in society. It does so through its strong programmes of citizenship, religious education and personal, social and health education. As a result, students' personal development is good and they contribute well to the school and wider community. Students' views are taken into account well. For example, a group of boys will shortly make a presentation to staff on raising boys' achievement.

When the current headteacher took over in September 2009, the school was in financial difficulties and experiencing a slow decline. Although GCSE results were improving slowly, students' progress was declining in relation to similar students in other schools, particularly in English. The headteacher quickly identified the need to tackle complacency by strengthening leadership, improving teaching and restructuring the school timetable. However, his room for manoeuvre was restricted by the pressing need to clear the school's financial deficit and he was forced to make some unpopular but necessary decisions.

Most of the senior leadership team have been appointed quite recently. They have played an enthusiastic and important role in ensuring that a critical mass of middle leaders and school staff share their commitment to improvement. There is now a much greater focus on students' progress. Regular assessments in each subject are recorded in an electronic database and checked against students' targets. As a result, intervention programmes are better focused on underachieving students, and teachers and subject leaders are more readily held accountable.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Lesson observations and short drop-in visits provide senior leaders with a good overview of teaching and learning. They act quickly to address any weaknesses, at an individual or a whole-school level. The most striking improvement has been in GCSE English. Until recently, too many students were making slow progress, especially middle ability boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Since then, a strong programme of professional development for staff and support for underachieving students has

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raised standards. English GCSE results improved considerably in 2011 and the current Years 10 and 11 students are doing even better. The gap between boys and girls is closing and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are now progressing well.

The best lessons seen in the inspection included a wide range of learning activities, including individual and group work, problem-solving tasks and independent research. Good use was made of video and music clips to bring lessons alive. Teachers demonstrated good subject expertise, for example in their probing questions that encouraged students to think more deeply. While teaching is now judged good overall, the use of assessment to support learning is only satisfactory. Senior leaders are aware of this issue, and have instigated a project to promote active learning through better assessment. However, not all teachers are taking part and the project has had limited impact. In some lessons, the same activities are planned for all students, regardless of their prior learning. Informal assessment opportunities are sometimes missed by teachers, for example to check that each student is making good progress, to personalise learning for different students or to reshape the lesson where necessary. Finally, the quality and regularity of marking is inconsistent, and teachers do not always check that students have followed any previous guidance. Consequently, students do not always know what they need to do to improve their work.

Most students, parents and carers believe that the school keeps students safe. However, some students who have experienced bullying are not confident that all staff take the issue seriously enough. In addition, the school does not record bullying incidents in an efficient way. Information about students who experience bullying is held in individual files and pastoral leaders' notebooks. The central bullying records only name the perpetrators. Consequently, the quality of care, guidance and support and the effectiveness of safeguarding are judged satisfactory.

The fact that the leaders and managers have overcome significant barriers to restore the school's previous effectiveness and to maintain the excellence of the sixth form demonstrates both the school's capacity for sustained improvement and the good value for money it provides. However, in prioritising its efforts on improving achievement, the school has neglected some other areas. Its plans for promoting community cohesion and its equal opportunities schemes are not explicit enough, making it difficult to monitor improvements. Until very recently, the school has not been able to spare funds to improve the site, the fabric of the buildings or the problematic layout of the car parks and the school reception desk. However, the school has made satisfactory arrangements to reduce the impact of these difficulties.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Promote the school's anti-bullying message more strongly to students and staff and ensure that its records of bullying incidents are comprehensive and readily accessible for leaders and managers to review.

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- Improve the use of assessment to support learning by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use assessment information effectively to plan activities that take into account the needs of students working at different levels and enable all to make progress from their starting points
 - make regular use of informal assessment during lessons to check that each student is making good progress, to personalise learning for different students and to reshape the lesson where necessary
 - provide clear guidance on what students need to do to improve their work by marking students' work regularly and checking that previous guidance has been followed.

- Improve the schools' promotion of equal opportunities and community cohesion by:
 - developing formal plans that set out the actions the school intends to take
 - ensuring that the impact of those actions are evaluated by senior leaders and the governing body.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 fluctuates from year to year, but is always above average. In recent years, the school's GCSE results have not risen as fast as the national average. This is mainly because the school has not followed the national trend of entering students for vocational qualifications. However, the recent improvements to teaching and learning mean that achievement is now good. The current Year 11 students are reaching higher standards than their predecessors, despite having considerably lower attainment on entry to the school. Attainment is above average overall and is high in mathematics, modern foreign languages, religious education, information and communication technology, business studies, economics and geography.

As their progress in English has improved, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have been better able to meet their targets in a range of subjects. Students with autistic spectrum disorders and those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties receive good support to develop their social skills.

Learning and progress are now good in a large majority of lessons. Students are interested in, and contribute well to, their own learning because they are well motivated. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, students collaborated well to create comedy by applying their knowledge of accent and dialect in role-play. Students are well prepared for their future lives. They work well with others and apply their basic skills well in a range of contexts, including events outside school, such as the 'Formula 1 in Schools' challenge.

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Most students enjoy school and this is reflected in their high attendance. They are polite and welcoming, and apart from some occasional boisterousness, their behaviour around the school is good. They understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and participate well in sporting activities. Students from a variety of different groups contribute well to the school and wider community by taking on leadership roles. Many are involved in voluntary or charitable work. Students show creativity, inquisitiveness and a willingness to reflect on their experiences. They participate enthusiastically in artistic, musical and dramatic activities, and gain a good understanding and satisfactory experience of cultures and faiths different to their own.

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	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2

How effective is the provision?

The inspection confirmed the school's view that the quality of teaching is good. Senior leaders recognise that the most effective lessons are those where teachers make good use of assessment in lessons to enhance learning. The management of students' behaviour in lessons is good.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that enables nearly all students to gain a range of qualifications that represent good academic achievement. Recent changes have given students more choice about what they study in Key Stage 4, though there are still few vocational options. Additional flexibility is provided by the preparation for work and basic skills programmes and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course. The school has well-

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

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developed business links that enhance the curriculum further. High levels of participation in technology subjects reflect the school’s specialism. Extra-curricular provision helps make up for the absence of timetabled drama lessons.

The school works effectively with other agencies to support students who face challenging circumstances. A determined campaign in partnership with parents and carers has improved attendance from average to high. The well-organised careers and guidance programme helps smooth the transitions into Key Stage 4 and beyond. There are good induction arrangements for students new to the school, particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Other provision for these students is undergoing a period of transition following the appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator. Teaching assistants are being trained to monitor the progress that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make against their targets. However, they do not always get clear direction from teachers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The recently restructured senior leadership team is focusing its effort on improving teaching and learning and building leadership capacity among middle leaders. Professional development arrangements include after-school training sessions focusing on areas of weakness, support from advanced skills teachers from other schools, peer observation to share good practice, and an ‘active learning’ group. As they gain experience, senior leaders are using data more forensically to guide their improvement planning. Key areas of weakness are now being tackled systematically, but timescales are sometimes vague, and this hinders evaluation of impact. Senior leaders monitor teaching and learning regularly, and are increasingly devolving some of this work to subject leaders, particularly in the detailed reviews of departments. Most subject leaders are effective managers of their departments and a growing number are becoming effective leaders. However, some are too trusting and do not see the need for regular checks, for example to monitor marking and lesson planning.

The school makes strenuous efforts to communicate with parents and carers through regular newsletters, consultations evenings and the facility to check their children’s progress on-line. The parents and carers of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are involved well in reviewing their children’s individual education

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plans. The school actively promotes community cohesion within the school and with several primary schools through its leadership partner specialism. However, plans for developing community cohesion in the local, national and international contexts are not well articulated.

The effectiveness of safeguarding is satisfactory. Child protection arrangements are secure, training is up to date and the vetting of adults exceeds current requirements. However, the schools’ bullying records are not comprehensive enough, making it difficult for senior leaders to monitor the impact of bullying on different groups of students, particularly the most vulnerable groups. For this reason, the school’s promotion of equality is also judged satisfactory. Focused intervention has helped reduce variations in the performance of different groups. Students from ethnic minorities feel well supported by the school.

The school finances are now well controlled and this has enabled the school to reduce its licensed deficit ahead of time and bid for capital funding to improve the premises. The governing body holds the school to account satisfactorily. It has an appropriate committee structure, but it mostly works with senior leaders and its interaction with the wider staff is limited. The governing body has not given a strong enough lead on the promotion of community cohesion and equality, or ensured that bullying records provide a clear overview.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The prior attainment of students starting GCE courses is average. They make excellent progress in the sixth form so that AS- and A-level results are well above average, particularly in business studies, critical thinking, economics, English

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literature, geography, law, mathematics, physics, psychology, religious studies and sociology.

Learning and progress in sixth form lessons is outstanding because of the high quality of teaching. For example, in an outstanding law lesson, the students were interested and well informed. They enjoyed the challenge of demonstrating through their written work their understanding of statutory interpretation of law. In an excellent geography lesson, students shared their research findings with each other and, with expert guidance from the teacher, critically evaluated their coursework to find ways of making it even stronger. Teachers provide memorable experiences that bring learning alive, as in a physics lesson where students performed a song they had composed to help them recall key definitions.

The sixth form curriculum has a strong academic emphasis which meets students’ needs well. It now includes some vocational courses in information and communication technology. Some level 2 courses are offered, but they have not attracted viable numbers, because opportunities are readily available from other providers. Guidance for students applying for higher education is very well organised and includes a strong programme to support Oxbridge applicants.

Leaders and managers of the sixth form have established strong systems to ensure that all students make at least good progress in their academic and personal development. Variations between subjects and between boys and girls are being rapidly reduced. Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The strong response to the questionnaire for parents and carers reflects their good involvement in their children’s education. Most parents and carers are happy with their children’s experience of school and disagree with at most one or two of the questionnaire statements. Several parents and carers had only praise for the school. For example: ‘I am extremely supportive of the school's eagerness to ensure all the children are developed as a whole person and not just academically throughout their school life. I am very pleased my children attend St John Payne school.’

A few parents and carers raised concerns about the school’s communication with them and about the way it deals with bullying. The inspection found that the school

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is trying hard to improve its communications with parents and carers, for example by providing on-line access to their children's progress records. The inspectors found that the concerns raised about the school's response to incidents of bullying were justified. Consequently, this has been noted as an area for improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John Payne Catholic Comprehensive School, Chelmsford 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 416 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1142 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	194	47	207	50	10	2	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	203	49	207	50	6	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	140	34	236	57	28	7	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	156	38	227	55	19	5	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	163	39	231	56	9	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	123	30	243	58	35	8	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	103	25	253	61	51	12	3	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)	147	35	213	51	17	4	1	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	145	35	243	58	15	4	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	144	35	218	52	36	9	6	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	77	19	261	63	39	9	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	131	31	243	58	21	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	202	49	194	47	14	3	2	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 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.



25 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St John Payne Catholic Comprehensive School, Chelmsford, CM1 4BS

Following the recent inspection of your school, I am pleased to report that it has been judged a good school overall, with an outstanding sixth form. Most of you enjoy school and attendance is high. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Many of you are involved in voluntary or charitable work and take on leadership roles. In lessons, you try your best and are keen to succeed.

Until quite recently, the school was going through a difficult patch. Disappointing results in GCSE English meant that too many of you were making slower than expected progress. When Mr Schular took over in September 2009, he quickly identified some problems that were holding the school back. Together with the mostly new senior leadership team, he has made some important changes. The timetable is now better structured and provides more choice in Key Stage 4. Teaching has improved and your progress is now checked very regularly so that anyone who falls behind can quickly be given support. These changes have led to better learning and progress for you.

There are still some areas that need to improve. We have asked the school to improve assessment in lessons and marking, to help you improve your work. We want better lesson planning, to help those of you who are a bit behind or ahead of the rest of the class. Most importantly, we have recommended that the school improves the way it deals with bullying. Although most of you say you feel safe in school, some students who have experienced bullying told us that it had not been dealt with as well as they had hoped.

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you all for the welcome we received, and to thank especially those of you who gave up your time to talk to us or to complete our questionnaires. You can help the school to improve by making sure that you always report any bullying that you experience or witness.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott
Her Majesty's Inspector

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