

St James's Church of England School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105266
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	377215
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Patrick Geraghty HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,032
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Morrison
Headteacher	Tania Lewyckyj
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2008
School address	Lucas Road Farnworth Bolton BL4 9RU
Telephone number	01204 333000
Fax number	01204 333201
Email address	head@st-james.bolton.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of their time visiting 39 lessons, observing the same number of teachers. They also held meetings with staff, groups of students, and the chair and members of the governing body. Documentation was scrutinized including: information related to the tracking of the academic and personal progress of students; detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress; the school's summary self-evaluation; minutes from meetings of the governing body; and evidence to demonstrate how the school supports students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Inspectors also examined evaluations undertaken by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding. In addition, 450 parents' and carers' questionnaires were scrutinised along with questionnaires returned by a representative sample of staff and students.

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

- Whether strategies to improve students' attainment and progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 have been effective and are sustainable.
- Whether teaching and learning are sufficiently challenging to promote and sustain even better outcomes for students.
- Whether the monitoring and evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels are sufficiently well embedded to drive and sustain improvement.

Information about the school

St James's Church of England School and Sports College is a larger than average secondary school. It was awarded specialist sports college status in 2005. It draws students from a wide catchment area within and beyond Bolton. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. It has a higher than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just above average, although the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is below. The school has achieved a Sportsmark and the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark. It has Healthy 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. One student aptly summarised the ethos of the school: 'It's a family community in the best way, one that welcomes you and opens a door to limitless opportunities and teaches you how to embrace them'. In the achievement of this ethos, the school has found an exceptional headteacher; her energy in the pursuit of excellence is boundless. She has provided a razor-sharp focus in identifying and tackling any underperformance and in promoting the centrality of excellence in teaching and learning. Staff and students alike have high aspirations. Senior leadership is uniformly excellent and highly focused on improvement. Middle leaders have embraced accountability and are drivers of high standards. Consequently students make outstanding progress and their attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the national average and continues to improve. Differences in the attainment of different groups of students have been significantly narrowed. The school acknowledges that it now needs to further increase the percentage of students achieving GCSE grades A* to A.

Teaching is outstanding and at the core of school activities. Teachers share their teaching approaches with students who have become partners in teaching and learning. Seeking excellence in the classroom drives the school's aspirational and improvement agenda. Staff share with enthusiasm their best practice and consistently seek to improve. The school acknowledges that in a few classes assessment and marking do not reflect the very best practice that it expects. The curriculum fully meets the needs of all students and is broad and well balanced. The management and quality of provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are excellent. Transition arrangements are well planned and students start the school with confidence. Care, guidance and support are outstanding.

Exceptional management at all levels has enabled the school to innovate and improve. Aspirational targets are set for all. The governing body, rooted strongly in the local communities, is actively involved in the school and adroitly supports its improvement agenda. Parents and carers are actively engaged in the school and are highly supportive. The school has developed exceptional links and partnerships with its local community which have had a significant impact on the quality of student outcomes and provision. Safeguarding is outstanding. Self-evaluation is robust, honest, embedded and relentlessly focused on improvement. The school has

exceptional capacity for improvement, to meet new challenges and to continue to excel.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the percentage of students attaining GCSE grades A* to A.
- Ensure assessment and marking in all classes reflect the very best practice that the school expects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students make at least good progress from above-average starting points as they move through the school. From the start a sense of challenge and enjoyment is nurtured through the innovative 'Learning Zone' programmes. Here, skills of problem-solving, team building and independent learning are developed to enable a self-confident, aspirational and inquisitive approach to study and learning. In one session students built, in cooperative groups, a free-standing tower of paper and then proceeded to analyse what they had learned about organisation and team work. Their discussions were evaluative and underlined the development of sound learning skills and the application of problem-solving techniques. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding and reflects the exceptional planning of their programmes and the quality of intervention strategies. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE is well above the national average. When English and mathematics are included this figure is also well above average and increased by a further 8% in 2011. The achievement of boys rose considerably and this significantly closed the gap with girls. Scrutiny of current tracking information and evidence from inspection lesson observations indicate that a strong trend of improvement is continuing at Key Stage 4.

Students behave exceptionally well and make an exemplary contribution to the establishment of a harmonious and caring school community. Involvement with the wider community through a variety of activities and excellent links with the local parish is outstanding. This is led by the exceptional school council which makes a vibrant contribution to school life. Students understand what they need to do to lead a healthy lifestyle. They participate regularly in the ample sporting opportunities provided by the school. Attendance is very high and reflects students' enjoyment of and commitment to the school. This, together with high attainment in literacy and numeracy and excellent progression rates to further education, is ensuring that students are prepared very well for the next stage of their education or the world of work. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students make an extensive contribution to assemblies, tutor groups, worship activities and local cultural programmes.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Overall, teaching is outstanding, and lessons are rarely less than good. In the best lessons, time is used well and planning is highly focused and comprehensive. These lessons are characterised by enthusiasm, very effective use of timed activities, excellent pace, and high expectations. There are excellent opportunities for independent learning. Technology is used very well to support learning. For example, in one very well paced and planned electronics lesson, Year 8 students used, with confidence, a visualiser to demonstrate to other class members the construction of their circuit. Students watched and then asked questions to confirm their own thoughts and understanding of circuitry. Resources are very well designed and used effectively. Data are used very well to plan lessons and group activities that are suitably matched to students' abilities and aspirations. Students are seen as partners in learning; they contribute to the teaching because teachers share their techniques with them. This was best exemplified in the innovative 'Learning Zone' activities, where thinking and problem-solving skills are encouraged and so inspire students. In the few satisfactory lessons, the pace slackens at times and there is too much teacher talk. Questioning is not used to challenge and develop students' participation. In most lessons marking demonstrates consistency of quality, with detailed and informative feedback on how the student can progress further. However, formative marking is not fully developed across all classes in a way that reflects the very high quality evident in the best practice.

The school offers an outstanding curriculum which is broad and well balanced and which gives students the opportunities to be challenged, to aspire and to succeed. The 'Learning Zone' curriculum for Year 7 and 8 students is focused on developing personal learning, problem-solving and thinking skills. Here, students are enthused by independent and group learning activities; the area sizzles with fun, vitality and application. These developing skills are appropriately linked into all subjects and provide the foundation for students' outstanding progress at Key Stage 3. There is a strong focus on the development of literacy skills at Key Stage 3 through the bronze, silver, gold and platinum programmes in Year 7 and the Olympic route programme in

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

Year 8. Partnerships enhance the curriculum, and the school is particularly acute in networking with other outstanding providers to enable further curriculum development and reflection. The great majority of students follow an academic pathway in Key Stage 4. However, the school has developed its vocational curriculum in recent years and ensures high-quality provision through well-developed partnerships with outside providers. The specialism in sport plays a pivotal role in contributing to the breadth and quality of curriculum development, initiatives and partnerships. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, which have a good take-up by students.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students and parents and carers consistently refer to the 'caring and family nature' of the school. Excellent transition links with primary schools ensure that when students arrive in Year 7 the school is fully prepared to meet both their individual and collective needs. Students settle into school with confidence and enjoyment. Highly effective partnerships with external agencies ensure maximum support, particularly for the most vulnerable students. Data are used very well by pastoral staff to monitor the progress of all students and provide well-tailored intervention strategies. The outstanding guidance, including careers guidance, which begins when students join from primary school to the time they embark on further education, contributes to a highly-aspirational culture. Students are highly positive about the excellent guidance that they receive from the school. Very high numbers progressed to further education or apprenticeships in 2010.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
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?

There has been exceptional leadership by the headteacher in targeting areas of underperformance and in embedding a culture of improvement and high aspirations for all. The headteacher has moulded a very able senior leadership team which presents a razor-sharp focus on improvement. There is a strong sense of purpose across the school. Challenging targets are set for students and teachers. Robust data systems to track and monitor students' progress are embedded. The management of data, evaluation of performance and tracking of progress are excellent. The management of teaching and learning is outstanding. Excellent work by the 'transforming learning team' has embedded a culture of improvement and innovation across the school. Staff development is highly focused and has impacted on improved teaching and effective sharing of good practice. Intensive support has enabled teachers to improve and develop new skills. Self-evaluation is accurate and self-critical. Middle management is strong, accountable and fully engaged in supporting and enabling continued school improvement. Governance is outstanding, providing a robust challenge and evaluation of the school's performance. The governing body is fully involved in the monitoring of the school's work and takes part

in many school activities. In particular, it has forged a highly constructive and beneficial link with local communities. Partnerships are outstanding. Strong partnerships with linked primary schools ensure that students' transition is seamless. Well-developed links with colleges enhance students' current and future learning opportunities. Links with a variety of agencies add to the outstanding quality of care, support and guidance. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and links with them are exceptional. Communication is excellent. Exemplary promotion of equal opportunities ensures that all students, regardless of ability or background, make excellent progress and achieve very well. The promotion of community cohesion is good. The school has established good links with the local community and developed beneficial international links. Safeguarding is outstanding; policies and procedures are highly comprehensive in range and coverage. The use of technology to support safeguarding systems and to monitor, evaluate and inform on the progress of the most vulnerable learners is exemplary.

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	1
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

The response rate was well above average for this type of school. An analysis of responses to the questionnaire indicates that the vast majority of parents and carers are happy with their child's experience at school and that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that their child is well prepared for the future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St James's Church of England School and Sports 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 450 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,032 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	232	52	208	46	5	1	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	244	54	203	45	2	0	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	220	49	206	46	17	4	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	199	44	237	53	10	2	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	212	47	226	50	7	2	2	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	151	34	267	59	25	6	4	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	140	31	273	61	30	7	1	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)	184	41	238	53	9	2	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	180	40	243	54	11	2	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	191	42	225	50	21	5	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	129	29	268	60	28	6	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	230	51	205	46	7	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	254	56	181	40	11	2	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 up 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 December 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of St James's Church of England School and Sports College,
Bolton, BL4 9RU**

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome that you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit. We would also like to commend you for your excellent behaviour and your commitment to making the school such a harmonious place to work in. We would particularly like to thank those of you who spoke with us.

Our inspection found that yours is now an outstanding school. You are making outstanding progress throughout your time at the school. Your results are high and well above national averages. You are developing high aspirations. There is much good and some outstanding teaching in the school. In these lessons, you respond well to the teachers' high expectations. Your curriculum is outstanding. The teachers and support staff give you outstanding care, guidance and support.

The leaders in your school worked with us to decide on some ways in which your provision could be better. We decided that to achieve this, the school should:

- improve the percentage of students who attain GCSE grades A* to A
- ensure that when teachers mark your work it reflects the very best practice that your school expects.

You can help your school to improve further by ensuring that everyone continues to focus on the pursuit of excellence and by continuing your endeavours in your studies so that you can achieve your full potential in life.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.