

Saint Aidan's Church of England Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119789
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379888
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	David Brown 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	813
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Taylor
Headteacher	Alan Porteous
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 35 lessons taught by 34 different teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body, a local authority representative and nominated staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including its self-evaluation, school improvement plans, lesson observation records, safeguarding procedures and other performance information. In addition, 657 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised along with questionnaires returned by school staff and by a representative sample of students.

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

- The rates of progress of all groups of students.
- The quality and consistency of teaching in the school and the extent to which this has an impact on the progress students make in different subjects.
- How well teachers use assessment information to ensure that lessons meet the needs of all learners.
- The impact of work to address differences in performance between subjects.
- How well leaders and managers at all levels use performance data to evaluate the effectiveness of their planning.

Information about the school

Saint Aidan's is a Church of England College with specialist status for technology. It is a smaller than average size voluntary aided secondary school serving a mixed rural and urban community near the Fylde coast. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Most students are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below the national average; the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is lower than that seen nationally. The school has the 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Aidan's Church of England Technology College provides a satisfactory quality of education for its students. The good care, guidance and support mean that students develop into confident and articulate young people. Students speak highly of the support they receive within the vertical tutor groups, students' behaviour is good and they are friendly, caring and supportive of each other.

Attainment has declined in recent years and is now average overall. The provisional examination results for 2011 indicate that Year 11 students left the school with attainment which was broadly in line with the national average in terms of the proportion of students who gained five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics. This means that these students made satisfactory progress during their time in the school from their starting points. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that students in the school are making satisfactory progress which is showing signs of improvement, although not evenly across all subjects. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive excellent support and make good progress.

The school community is notable for its highly positive relationships throughout. A typical comment made by one parent, 'the school has an atmosphere that makes all students feel safe, valued and happy' sums up their views well. A very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's education and speak positively about the quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school. Occasional incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with quickly and students know where they can go for advice and guidance or to talk over any issues they experience. As a result, behaviour around school and in lessons is good.

The overall quality of teaching is good and occasionally outstanding, despite remaining variations between and within subject departments. This strong profile of teaching is contributing to the signs of improvement in the rate of students' learning. A common feature of the best lessons is the effective use of assessment to support students' learning but there are times when work is not planned well enough to match the needs and prior attainment of different groups of students. Students respond positively in lessons and are courteous and welcoming to visitors.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and a well-organised pathways system at Key Stage 4 meets the varying needs of students. A varied programme of enrichment and

extra-curricular activities also makes a valuable contribution to students' enjoyment of school. A range of effective partnerships have been developed with local businesses and the uniformed services to support curriculum focus days. The school has made excellent progress in improving attendance to well above the national average. Students make good progress in developing their personal skills and qualities with the vast majority progressing into education, employment or training. The school's recently improved system for tracking students' progress is enabling a sharper focus on students at risk of failure at Key Stage 4.

Leaders and managers, including members of the governing body, know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate but lacks sharpness in tackling key areas of improvement. There is a lack of systematic and rigorous monitoring, evaluation and review of actions. This means leaders and managers are not always aware of how the actions taken have, or will, impact on outcomes for students. The school has devised systems to improve the quality of teaching and the use of assessment information but these lack challenge and have not had sufficient impact on improving progress. Common procedures have been established but there is inconsistency in the rigour with which these are carried out by senior and middle leaders. Recent additions to the school leadership team support the school's satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the school's leadership and management to be consistently good, including that of teaching and learning, by:
 - revising the school improvement plan so that targets are both challenging and realistic, are accompanied by clear action plans and have success criteria that are linked to outcomes for students
 - ensuring that leaders and managers, including members of the governing body, consistently communicate high expectations to the staff about securing improvement
 - developing the skills of all leaders so that they can accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and their impact on students' progress.
- Improve the quality of students' learning and their progress throughout the school by:
 - sharing best practice within the school to increase further the proportion of good and outstanding teaching
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information more effectively to plan and deliver lessons that are closely matched to the needs and prior attainment of all students

- raising teachers' expectations of students so that all lessons have high levels of challenge and move at a brisk pace.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The achievement of students is satisfactory. Students enter school with average attainment and the proportion that gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C is broadly average. The school has recognised that there are areas of inconsistency or underperformance in some subjects and is now taking appropriate action to secure improvements. The school acknowledges the need to raise the proportion of students gaining five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics, and those gaining two A* to C grades in science. Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive carefully targeted additional support and make good progress.

Students made good progress in the large majority of lessons observed during the inspection. In some curriculum areas expectations have been raised, for example, in a Year 11 art lesson the teacher constantly challenged the students and through regular and detailed feedback ensured that they made excellent progress. However, these improvements are not as yet consistently applied throughout the school. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Students show consideration for others and have clear respect for the values promoted by the school. Students of all ages form positive relationships with staff and are polite and considerate. Their attendance is high and they are punctual to lessons. Students are encouraged to develop aspirations for higher education.

Students say they feel safe in school and they have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and lifestyle. Many students take part in physical and sporting activities regularly and make a good contribution to school and community life. The school has a student leadership group with representatives from each year group and students believe that they are listened to, their opinions are valued and that they can influence decisions about school life. There are great strengths in the students' spiritual and moral development resulting from the high profile of the Christian ethos of the school, although students' social and cultural development is more limited due to a lack of effective planning in these areas.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

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 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	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching overall is good with a small proportion that is outstanding. Recent improvements in the quality and consistency of teaching are beginning to lead to improved outcomes for students. In the most effective lessons, teachers have high aspirations for students, set challenging tasks and work is at a brisk pace. When lessons are planned well teachers assess the needs of their students quickly and precisely, and adapt what they do to ensure all students understand and make good progress. The best lessons are characterised by genuine enthusiasm for the subject and an excellent range of targeted activities. In one Year 7 mathematics lesson, for example, students were highly engaged in a challenging task to find the mean for groups of data. Learning and progress were outstanding due to the excellent relationships formed by the teacher; as one student said, 'this lesson is hard but fun'.

However, senior leaders and managers recognise that there is still variation in the quality of teaching in some areas of the school, especially in the use of assessment to support students' learning. Where teaching is less effective, there is too much teacher talk and students are passive and compliant, there are few opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and they are not guided in how to improve. Learning in such lessons is often through a single planned task with little challenge or opportunity for differentiated activities. Inspectors saw some outstanding practice in the use of assessment information but this is variable in its use across different subjects.

The extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of all students is good. The curriculum is well planned in consultation with parents, carers and students, is broad and balanced, and allows a range of individual pathways for students that are well matched to their identified learning needs. The school has extended its provision for vocational courses at Key Stage 4 where the students are now able to choose from a wider range of different qualifications. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, some related to its specialism, and has recently introduced additional qualifications in photography and astronomy.

The school is a caring organisation and places great emphasis on the provision of good quality care, guidance and support. Students' progress is systematically and regularly monitored. Staff know the students well and those students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are identified and provided with targeted support. For example the 'Oasis' lunchtime club provides younger students with opportunities to develop their thinking and motor-skills through the use of games, supported by Year 11 mentors. There are highly effective transition arrangements established for students when they enter the school and as a result of the support they receive older students make confident and well-informed choices about their future.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Although there are strengths in senior and middle leadership, the overall effectiveness of leadership and management is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have maintained a number of good outcomes for students but have not tackled quickly enough significant weaknesses, such as the decline in students' achievement and differences in performance between subjects. Procedures for the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning at both school and departmental level have been developed, although leaders, managers and the governing body do not as yet have a fully accurate picture of the quality of teaching and how it links to the progress of students. Significant progress has been made in improving teaching and learning, although some weaknesses remain, most notably in science. There are insufficient opportunities to share the good and at times outstanding practice which exists in this area.

The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is only broadly accurate. Action plans do not have success criteria that are linked to outcomes for students. This makes it difficult for the school to measure the effectiveness of its actions. The school has identified these weaknesses and has recently strengthened the school leadership team to address these issues. However, academic targets are not challenging enough and the procedures by which departments evaluate their effectiveness are insufficiently sharp and systematic.

The governing body has a good range of expertise and is extremely supportive of the school but they have not challenged the school with enough rigour to ensure that variations in performance are eradicated. Safeguarding is good and given a high priority; the safeguarding policy is clearly stated and followed and all reasonable actions are taken to ensure that the school is a safe place. Child protection procedures are strong and well administered, and training for staff is thorough and of good quality.

Assessment information is shared regularly with parents and carers, who value the quality of communication with the school and the reports they receive about their child's progress. The school promotes equal opportunities well and has established appropriate policies. All students are treated fairly, irrespective of religion, race or other characteristics.

Community cohesion is promoted within the school through a developing range of curricular and extra-curricular activities; students demonstrate empathy for those from a different culture but have very limited experiences of the diversity of the multicultural country in which they live. The school has not yet developed and

evaluated its policies in this regard. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory education for its students and gives satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers that responded to the parental questionnaire was much higher than average and the overwhelming majority showed high levels of satisfaction with the school. In particular, almost all believe that their child enjoys school and feel that their child is safe. A small number of parents and carers who responded added written comments. Many praised the school, however, concerns which were raised included poor behaviour between and in lessons. The inspection team observed behaviour in classrooms and around the school, held discussions with staff and students and scrutinised records of behaviour. Their findings are in the report. Positive written comments were focused on praising the school for its pastoral care and support of individual students. The strong set of positive responses from parents and carers endorses the inspectors' view that St Aidan's is a satisfactory and improving school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Saint Aidan's Church of England Technology College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 657 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 813 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	244	37	363	55	37	6	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	300	46	331	50	17	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	210	32	369	56	58	9	7	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	240	37	345	53	44	7	6	1
The teaching is good at this school	216	33	383	58	31	5	2	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	193	29	389	59	49	7	6	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	157	24	412	63	58	9	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)	224	34	353	54	25	4	6	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	235	36	354	54	35	5	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	239	36	342	52	30	5	20	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	181	28	347	53	57	9	7	1
The school is led and managed effectively	214	33	382	58	28	4	5	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	282	43	321	49	26	4	8	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 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).

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 December 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Saint Aidan's Church of England Technology College, Poulton-le-Fylde – FY6 ONP

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed talking to you and were pleased to be able to take your views into account. It was also very helpful that many of your parents and carers completed the questionnaire as we could also take account of their views. I thought you might like to know what we thought about your school.

Your school is a satisfactory school with a number of good features. Some of the best things which we saw were that:

- the care, guidance and support you receive are good and you feel safe
- the quality of teaching you receive is good
- the curriculum the school provides for you is good
- your behaviour is good and your attendance is high
- you know well how to follow a healthy lifestyle.

Your attainment is average and the progress you make in your learning is satisfactory. This is why the school is satisfactory overall, rather than good.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and the governing body to make a number of improvements to improve the quality of your learning and progress throughout the whole school by:

- making improvements to leadership and management, particularly the way in which leaders evaluate and check on the school's progress in raising students' achievement
- sharing best practice within the school to help make teaching and the use of assessment consistently good or better in all curriculum areas
- raising your teachers' expectations so that all lessons have high levels of challenge and move at a brisk pace.

You can help your teachers by continuing to behave well and by working hard at all times. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

David Brown HMI
Lead Inspector

