

Archbishop Blanch CofE VA High School, A Technology College and Training School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104705
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	377113
Inspection dates	30 April 2012–1 May 2012
Lead inspector	Peter Cox

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 students	11–18
Gender of students	Girls
Gender of students in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of students on the school roll	926
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank McFarlane
Headteacher	Jane Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2008
School address	Mount Vernon Road Liverpool L7 3EA
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Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	30 April 2012–01 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Kathleen Harris

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Barbara Dutton

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 38 lessons taught by 38 teachers. In addition, inspectors visited two assemblies and observed the behaviour of students at breaks and during lunchtimes. Meetings were held with three groups of students, members of the governing body including the Chair and members of staff. A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, monitoring records regarding the quality of teaching and information on students' current achievement. The inspection team also considered an analysis of 259 parent and carer questionnaire responses and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Archbishop Blanch is a slightly smaller than average-sized girls' secondary school. It has a co-educational sixth form that operates in collaboration with five other schools in Liverpool. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, so too, is the proportion from minority ethnic groups. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is below the national average. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The school has technology college status and is an applied learning school. It has a number of awards including 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	2
Achievement of students	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of students	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Students achieve well and attain significantly above-average standards by the end of Year 11 and Year 13. The school is not outstanding because although students' achievement is good overall, some higher-attaining girls do not progress as well as they should given their starting points. The school is aware of this and procedures are in place to address the issue.
- Teaching is good and there are examples of outstanding practice. Good teaching over time has resulted in students' good achievement for the last three years. Yet, the level of challenge provided for students, particularly those of a higher ability, is not demanding enough across all subjects. Furthermore, the quality of marking is too variable across subjects.
- Behaviour is outstanding. The girls are excellent ambassadors for their school. They are polite, well meaning and inquisitive towards visitors and genuinely concerned for their well-being and their view of their school. Attitudes to learning are equally outstanding and are maintained by the girls when the teaching is less than good and lacking appropriate challenge.
- Leadership and management are good. The governing body challenges and supports the school well. The management of the school's performance is good. While the majority of senior leaders are relatively new to their posts, they are, however, effective in ensuring students continue to attain significantly above-average standards both in the main school and the sixth form. The quality of middle leaders is more variable. Senior leaders recognise, rightly, the benefits of all middle leaders being accountable for whole-school improvements, particularly that of students' achievement and have set in train systems to ensure this happens. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- The sixth form is good. Achievement is good and attainment above average, reflecting that of the main school. The collaborative partner arrangements with other schools

benefit the students because of the wider curriculum offer which outweighs the logistics of students commuting from one school site to another.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that students of all abilities are provided for in every lesson through sharper use of student performance data that creates more purposeful and challenging learning activities, particularly for the higher-attaining students
 - more effective marking across subject areas that provides students with clear information on the next steps for learning and that when corrections are requested they are revisited and marked.
- Increase the effectiveness of middle leaders by:
 - holding them more firmly to account for whole-school achievement
 - sharing the best practice, that already exists in the school, more widely.

Main Report

Achievement of students

The vast majority of parents, carers and students who responded to the questionnaire survey believe good progress is made in learning during the time students attend Archbishop Blanch, including that in the sixth form. Learning seen in lessons during the inspection confirms the good progress made. Students acquire knowledge quickly and in some subjects are stretched to secure high levels of understanding and, consequently, make outstanding progress in these subjects. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, the students had already secured high grades in their GCSE examinations and were using the time effectively to study at AS level. They did this with high levels of enthusiasm and engagement. Because of the timely early examination entry this year in mathematics, the results secured already, confirm a much higher proportion of students making significant gains in their learning than is seen nationally. The school's data confirm that students' progress in English is currently in excess of that expected nationally although to a lesser extent when compared with mathematics. Progress in learning at Key Stage 3 has improved since the previous inspection as evidenced in the majority of the lessons seen, the school's data and the scrutiny of students' work in lessons.

Students enter Year 7 from a large number of primary schools across the area and arrive with attainment that is overall above average. The school's own data gathered after testing the abilities of students soon after they arrive confirm this. Students make further gains in their learning over time leaving with attainment that is significantly better than the national average and has been for at least the last three years. Although the proportion of those securing the higher GCSE grades of A and A* was above average in 2011 it is not significantly so, bucking the trend of the other attainment indicators. Overall attainment in 2011, when compared with the school's 2010 performance, was slightly less impressive. This is attributed to some higher-attaining girls not securing their expected grades. The school has introduced appropriate improvement strategies that have stopped any repeat of this downward trend in attainment in 2012.

Literacy skills are good. Students present their work well and demonstrate good levels of applying punctuation and grammar in most subjects. Students' oral skills are good. Those spoken to in meetings and around the school talked confidently and convincingly about their experiences and their ambitions for the future. In most lessons, students were heard discussing their work with each other and with their teachers openly and confidently, often arriving at mature and convincing evaluations with well-constructed improvement points. Students display high levels of skill when reading aloud their findings from research, as demonstrated in a business studies lesson where the results of students' research into a retail company's website were explained convincingly to the class.

Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make equally good progress. Those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals have in the past made slower progress than others in the school. However, this gap in achievement has narrowed and is closing rapidly because of the early interventions applied to overcome any underachievement.

Students are prepared well for their next stage of education. A very high proportion of girls stay on into the sixth form. They make good progress and achieve well. By the time they leave the sixth form their attainment is above average. Students generally feel well supported in their subjects. Most know how well they are progressing and what they must do to improve. Interventions to challenge underachievement are swift and effective.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good as it supports the significantly above average attainment and good achievement. Teaching seen during the inspection was mostly good with some examples of outstanding practice. The stronger lessons are characterised by; the passion of teachers in their delivery, which aids engagement and enthusiasm of the students; strong subject knowledge of teachers and lively practical learning of the students; and well-constructed questioning of students that allows deeper thinking and well-considered responses. Staff are good role models, helping secure students' good moral and social development. All the students spoken to and almost all those who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the teaching they receive is good. Parent and carer responses echoed these proportions.

In the less successful lessons; teachers were seen to spend too much time talking about the lesson content, leaving less time for the students to get on with learning; tasks expected of students were not always sufficiently well matched to their ability, particularly the higher-attaining students; and there were limited opportunities to develop students' independent learning by allowing time for them to think and plan their own activities and development. Students talk of responding better to high degrees of challenge in lessons and possess a thirst to progress their learning at a rapid and sustained pace. However, not all teachers are providing the higher-quality teaching required to meet this demand.

The marking of work is inconsistent across departments. When it is most effective it is regular and meaningful and provides clear direction for students to help secure improvement. However, teachers do not always correct written work that contains spelling and grammatical errors. When teachers do ask for work to be corrected they do not revisit to see if it is done, this devalues the purpose of marking. Students know their targets and current levels or grades they are working at. At the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve marking by ensuring that students understood how they could improve

their work. The school has addressed this successfully in some subjects and particularly mathematics but there remain some pockets of weaker practice.

Teaching helps promote high levels of cooperation and coexistence between students from other schools in the sixth form and among students generally, and particularly those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs.

Behaviour and safety of students

The behaviour of the students seen during the inspection was outstanding. Attitudes to learning in lessons are equally exemplary. Students make an exceptional contribution to the safe and highly positive learning environment. They are ready and willing to learn and have high expectations of their teachers. Behaviour over time, as evidenced in the school's records, shows very few incidences of poor behaviour resulting in a fixed period of exclusion. Records of unacceptable behaviour show incidents to be very rare and, on the occasions when they do occur, the school deals with them appropriately. Students demonstrate high moral and social conduct in lessons and around the school; they understand different forms of bullying and have zero tolerance towards any type of discrimination. They are excellent ambassadors for the school, practically demonstrating the school's mission statement of being a cohesive learning community, 'showing the love of Christ through friendship, compassion and thanksgiving'. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are highly positive and consider the behaviour of students to be good. Almost all students and all of the staff considered behaviour in lessons and around the school to be good. Attendance levels are higher than those seen nationally and punctuality to lessons is impressive. Sixth form students who need to travel into school for specific lessons rely on public transport and sometimes arrive late due to no fault of their own. All students feel safe at all times.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers, including the governing body, are successful in managing the performance of the school and maintaining the significantly above-average attainment of the students seen over recent years. Achievement levels are good overall although the school recognises that further improvements are required to ensure that higher-attaining students achieve more. Development plans show appropriate strategies to secure these improvements. A recent external review by the local authority of the quality of teaching and learning provided points for improvement. The school is acting on these and is providing further opportunities for the professional development of teachers. The capacity to improve the school further is good.

The governing body demonstrates loyalty and commitment, providing well-informed challenge and support to the school. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet requirements and give no cause for concern. School leaders, together with the governing body and the students, through their well-developed social and moral approaches, promote equality of opportunity successfully and do not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

The systems for tracking students' progress and capturing whole-school progress data are cumbersome because a variety of different systems is used. Responsibility and accountability at middle leader level are variable. There are some very effective middle leaders who embrace the school's vision for increased student performance at the higher

level. However, this practice is not shared widely, consequently, not all middle leaders have risen to this challenge.

The school ensures that provision for their students at other sixth form sites is of at least as good a quality through well-informed quality assurance processes. The curriculum, including that in the sixth form, promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. It provides well for students and opportunities to take examinations early are well calculated. However, opportunities are missed within some subjects to help support independence of learning and for students to become less reliant on teachers' delivery.

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 students' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its students well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its students.
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 students. 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a student in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the students' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of students at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well students behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Students' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well students acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which students are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the students' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe students are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Students' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



2 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Archbishop Blanch CofE VA High School, A Technology College and Training School, Liverpool, L7 3EA

Thank you for making us welcome in your school when we came to inspect it recently. We enjoyed our time with you and were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and attitude to learning. Thanks to those of you who spoke to us in meetings, on the corridors, at lunch and in lessons, you are a credit to your school. You told us when we spoke with you and in your responses to the questionnaires that yours was a good school, we agree. You do well in examinations at the end of Year 11 and 13 because the teaching is good overall and those who lead and manage the school do a good job, too.

We have identified a number of areas where we think your school needs to make improvements. We have asked the governing body and the headteacher to ensure that the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is increased and that the level of challenge set for you in lessons is more appropriate to your needs and provide you with every opportunity to excel. And finally, that some subject leaders are held to account more for contributing to the overall achievement of the school.

All of you can help in improving the school further by asking for harder work when you find it easy, challenging yourselves and your teachers to do the very best you can and sustaining the outstanding behaviour you display in lessons and around the school.

It was a pleasure to have visited you and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Cox
Lead inspector

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