

St Thomas A Becket Catholic College Specialist Status In Humanities: With Autism Resource

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 108299 |
| Local authority | Wakefield |
| Inspection number | 377732 |
| Inspection dates | 29–30 May 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Clive Moss HMI |

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

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|--|---|
| 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 | 767 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Olivia Rowley |
| Headteacher | John Rooney |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 May 2007 |
| School address | Barnsley Road Sandal Wakefield WF2 6EQ |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Clive Moss

Ann Taylor

Janet Pruchniewicz

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 34 lessons taught by 33 members of staff and observed tutor groups, assemblies, and other occasions when students were learning. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of students, groups of staff, and individual members of staff with particular responsibilities. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line survey, Parent View, in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's data on students' achievement and behaviour, documents and policies relating to safeguarding, self-evaluation documents and records of the school's monitoring, evaluation and the performance management of the staff. They looked also at 194 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 94 from students, and 39 from members of staff.

Information about the school

The college is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average and has risen since the last inspection. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is also below average and has risen. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at the school action plus level and with a statement of special educational needs is below average; it includes 15 students currently in the autism resource, which serves the whole of the local authority area. The college has met the government floor standards for the attainment and progress of students. The current headteacher joined the school since the previous inspection. The college is currently preparing to become an academy.

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 | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |

Key Findings

- The overall effectiveness of the college is satisfactory. The college has many good features. In particular, it makes a very strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of the students, which parents and carers, justifiably, value particularly, and this is seen most clearly in the harmonious relationships between the different groups of students represented at the college. The college's overall effectiveness is not yet good because there is not yet sufficient teaching that is good or better to ensure consistently and securely good rates of progress by all students over time and in all subjects, including some of those that form part of the college's humanities specialism. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Generally, over the period since the previous inspection, the students' attainment has been above average in examinations at the end of Key Stage 4. Practically all of the students go on to further education or training subsequently.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The inspectors saw examples of good teaching and some that was outstanding. Such lessons were characterised by more-rapid learning by the students than in other lessons. Other teaching observed was satisfactory.
- The students are typically polite, respectful, and considerate and mature into responsible young people. The inspection evidence showed that behaviour is improving and the inspectors saw no examples of disruption to lessons.
- The leadership and management of the college are good. The college's approach to monitoring the students' attainment and progress and the quality of teaching is detailed, comprehensive, and undertaken thoroughly. As a result, previously declining trends in the students' attainment have been reversed and the rates of progress being made by students currently have increased. The school has demonstrated good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - focusing on planning and teaching lessons that meet the needs of all students through activities and tasks that take full account of their prior learning and attainment
 - engaging students actively in their learning in lessons
 - ensuring sufficient time and opportunities for students to learn independently, including through regular and meaningful homework and learning at home
 - providing opportunities for students to make choices about their work, ask their own questions, and influence the content of lessons
 - ensuring that the marking of students' work consistently provides a clear assessment of the learning and an indication of what they need to do to improve
 - using the school's assessment data to enable teachers to make full use of the support available for disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those in the autism resource.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

There are marked differences in the attainment of students on entry to the college between year groups. Previously, the students' attainment on entry has been significantly above average and this remains the case for Key Stage 4 students currently. At Key Stage 3, however, the students' attainment on entry is broadly average. Over the course of time since the last inspection, the students have generally made satisfactory progress, given their starting points. The inspection evidence shows that the rates of progress made by the students are improving, particularly at Key Stage 3. There are no significant differences in the rates of progress made by different groups of students, including those from minority ethnic groups. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers overall and some make better progress than expected, given their starting points, including students in the autism resource. In 2011, the attainment of disabled students and those with special educational needs was higher than similar pupils nationally.

The students show much willingness to reflect on a range of topics and issues and form sensible and reasoned views. Their literacy skills are generally above average. In responses to the inspection questionnaires, most parents and carers indicated that they think their children make good progress and most students think they do so most of the time also. The inspection evidence shows that to be the case increasingly and particularly in lessons where the teaching is good or outstanding. However, the quality of teaching has resulted in varying rates of progress by students over time since the previous inspection and the significant minority of teaching observed that was satisfactory rather than good resulted in less-rapid gains in learning. In lessons that do not provide sufficiently for the students' active engagement in learning, the students' behaviour becomes passive and compliant. They remain patient and

respectful and follow the instructions they are given, but this does not enable them to make rapid progress.

Quality of teaching

The best teaching observed at the college inspired and challenged the students by enabling them to be highly involved in their learning. Such lessons were characterised by:

- good relationships between the teacher and the students
- careful attention to the needs of different students
- well-planned opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of the students
- effective use of modern technology
- good assessment of learning during the lesson, with clear comments to the students and adaptations to the lesson accordingly.

In an outstanding geography lesson, for example, highly skilful questioning by the teacher challenged the students' thinking on the issue of illegal entry to the United States from Mexico. In an outstanding physical education lesson, the students were highly motivated to improve their hurdling and long jump techniques as a result in part of some very effective use of film footage of the Olympic athlete Carl Lewis.

Disabled students and those with special educational needs are provided with close support in lessons by teaching assistants, including the students in the autism resource. The support enables the students to keep pace with the lesson and to make progress at least as good as the other students. However, little of the planning or practice seen by the inspectors indicated how subject teachers were using the support to respond to the students' learning needs as indicated by their own assessments of the students' work, or to enable the students to work increasingly independently of the support.

In less-successful, though still satisfactory lessons;

- the planning did not identify clearly enough how the activities and tasks would be adapted to meet the needs of different groups of students, based on assessment information about their prior learning
- the students were not engaged actively in the lesson sufficiently
- there were few opportunities for students to learn independently, including students in the autism resource
- there were insufficient opportunities for the students to ask their own questions and make choices about their learning.

A notable minority of students indicated in the inspection questionnaire that they do not think the teachers are interested in their views. The students with whom the inspectors spoke often found the marking of their work to be helpful, but there are variations in practice, as there are also in the setting and checking of homework.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school is generally calm and orderly, even within the confines of its often-crowded corridors, doorways and stairwells, and the open and amenable manner of the students contributes significantly to the smooth running of lessons and good

relationships at the school. The students take on responsibilities readily and like to engage in discussions. They are capable of impeccable behaviour, as was seen during an assembly, when they coped admirably with a cramped room without seats, as a result of the school hall being required for examinations, in very hot and stuffy conditions; it is very doubtful that many adults would have dealt with it with such equanimity and dignity!

The students feel very safe at the college. Attendance is consistently above average and improving. Punctuality to school and to lessons is excellent. The students say that there is very little bullying of any description and that, when it occurs, it is mostly name-calling and usually dealt with effectively. The college's log shows racist incidents to be few. Permanent exclusions from the school are very rare, but, in 2010, the level of short-term exclusions was about twice the national average. The level of short-term exclusions has reduced very significantly since then. Although the inspectors saw no examples of disruption to lessons, it remains a concern to a small minority of the parents and carers, students, and staff who responded to the inspection questionnaires. A small minority of the staff indicated that they were concerned also about school policies on managing behaviour being applied inconsistently.

Leadership and management

The senior leaders have set out a very clear direction for the improvement of the college. In the inspection questionnaire for the staff, a very large majority indicated that they know what the college is trying to achieve and are proud to be members of it. That was confirmed in discussion with the inspectors. Good-quality data on the students' attainment and progress and strong processes for monitoring and evaluation are being used increasingly effectively to raise expectations of what the students can achieve and set them at the highest levels. With the support of the governing body, the senior leaders have set out exceptionally clear, challenging, and well-grounded targets for improvement in a focused school improvement plan. Along with consistently applied and well-conceived structures for performance management and staff development, that has resulted already in some rapid improvements in attainment in recent years, improving rates of progress by the students, very significant reductions in short-term exclusions, and improved attendance. Leaders and managers throughout the college focus clearly on improving the quality of teaching and the impact of their efforts is evident through the school's monitoring processes. They are, correctly, aware that it is further improvements in the quality of teaching that are the key to the next stage of the school's development.

There is an all-pervading approach to promoting the students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, rooted firmly and unequivocally in the college's Catholic ethos. That ethos is at the heart of the college's approach to promoting equalities and emphasises consideration and respect for others. Its impact is evident in the very harmonious nature of the student community, generally positive attitudes to school, and the students' development as confident young people. It ensures also that there are many and varied opportunities for the students to participate in activities that have a powerful effect on their attitudes and beliefs. One student wrote about her experience of working with a school in Africa 'I feel so enriched because I now understand the importance of education and how it is the key to

success, which I now deeply long for.’ The spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of the students is threaded through the curriculum, providing very significant enhancements to the statutory requirements and other courses that are provided and which support the different and changing learning needs of the students well.

The college works positively and productively with the local community, making effective use of its specialist status to do so. The school is responsive to the changing needs of its community, for example, ensuring letters are translated into community languages, such as Polish. It, understandably, enjoys the confidence of most parents and carers. Of those who wrote comments to the inspectors, there was a balance between praise for various aspects of the college’s work and individual concerns that often pointed towards difficulties experienced by some in communicating with the college. The college is very over-subscribed, which places significant pressures on the aging and manifestly worn accommodation. The governing body places a high priority on safeguarding and has ensured that the college’s current arrangements meet requirements.

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 | 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 pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' 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 pupils 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 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. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' 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.



31 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of St Thomas A Becket Catholic College Specialist Status In Humanities: With Autism Resource, Wakefield, WF2 6EQ

Thank you for talking to my colleagues and me when we visited your school recently. The inspectors spoke with you in lessons, around the school and in groups, looked at your work, read the results of questionnaires filled in by you and your parents and carers, and spoke with some of your teachers. Here is a summary of the main findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

- You go to a satisfactory school, which has many good features and is improving well.
- Your results in GCSE examinations are above average. Generally, over the time since the previous inspection, you have made satisfactory progress, but your progress is improving.
- Your attendance is also above average and your punctuality excellent.
- Your behaviour is mainly mature, polite, and considerate. This does not mean that you never misbehave, but the evidence shows your behaviour is improving.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and you respond very well to the teachers when they make the lessons active and interesting.
- The headteacher and the senior leaders, including the governing body, know what needs to be done to make things even better and are committed deeply to doing so.

I have asked the headteacher and the governing body to increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better, in order to make sure that all of you make securely and consistently good progress in all subjects. Having spoken with many of you, I am confident you will give them your full support.

Yours sincerely,

Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector

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