

Our Lady's Catholic College

Morecambe Road, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 2RX

19 – 20 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' achievement is good in almost all subjects especially in science, mathematics, English and sport. Achievement has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is mostly good with some that is outstanding. Most lessons are demanding and purposeful and teachers expect a great deal of students. Students relish the challenge of pair and group work that encourages debate and problem solving. Staff are very supportive of different needs so that all groups of students make good progress.
- Students are well-behaved, courteous and polite. They have mature attitudes towards their studies. They feel safe in college and are very well supported by staff.
- Leaders and the governing body have rigorously pursued and successfully improved teaching, the curriculum, students' behaviour and achievement. Staff across the college are strongly committed to the ambitions of leaders. The focus on eliminating inadequate teaching and ensuring more good teaching has been effective. These improvements have taken place whilst maintaining a highly supportive and caring environment.
- The sixth form is good and a strength of the college. Achievement is good and is particularly strong in A-level science subjects and mathematics. Teaching develops students as confident independent learners. Leadership sets high aspirations for staff and students and is highly supportive of individuals.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching and learning because inconsistencies remain in a few lessons and professional development is not yet focused tightly enough on improving teaching skills from good to outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The team observed 32 half-lessons and made further visits to lessons for shorter periods of time. Inspectors looked at students' workbooks whilst in lessons and scrutinised a sample of students' written work provided by the college that included work in mathematics, English, science and humanities.
- Discussions were held with students, staff and members of the governing body. A telephone discussion was held with the college's independent adviser.
- Documents looked at included the college self-evaluation summary and the improvement plan.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 28 responses to Ofsted's on-line Parent View, a recent survey of parents carried out by the college and a small number of letters from parents written to the lead inspector.
- Staff views were considered in their response to the Ofsted questionnaire.

Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Jane Holmes	Additional inspector
James Kidd	Additional inspector
Chanan Tomlin	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The college is average in size compared with other secondary schools.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through college action is above the national average. There is an average proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average.
- The Education Youth Service provides alternative provision for a small number of students in Year 11. A group of Year 11 students takes part in off-site work-related activities every other week. These are organised by college staff through a variety of partnerships.
- The college has specialist status for sport.
- The college works in collaboration with three local schools to extend the sixth form provision.
- The college meets current government floor standards, which set the minimum standards expected for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the skills of teachers further so that even more lessons result in outstanding learning by:
 - ensuring that the level of challenge provided for more-able students is consistently high in every lesson and that they know what they must do to reach their challenging targets
 - encouraging students to use and develop communication and literacy skills to a greater depth in all lessons
 - increasing further the confidence of teachers to provide opportunities for students to become more active learners through participation in challenging pair and group work where they have to think carefully, work independently and solve problems
 - using professional development opportunities to focus more specifically on transforming good teaching into outstanding teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students make good progress in most subjects and achieve well. Progress is securely good in English, mathematics and science and in sport and physical education, the college specialism. From attainment on entry that is below average, students make good progress and, based on 2011 validated results for students aged 16, reach above average attainment in science and average overall attainment in English and mathematics. The proportion of students who gained A* to C grades in English in 2011 was better than the national average but the proportion gaining the highest A*/A grades was not as strong.
- Unvalidated examination results for students aged 16 in July 2012 have improved in most subjects compared with those for 2011 and progress and achievement are good for all groups of students. The proportion of students reaching the highest grades of A*/A has increased significantly in 2012 and since the previous inspection. Weaker subjects identified in 2011 have been tackled and results in 2012 show improvement in most subjects but not in all areas of design and technology.
- The college tracks the progress of all groups and individuals very closely and well-targeted support is provided for those at risk of falling behind. In this way the principles and practice of equality of opportunity are well established. Funding for students known to be eligible for pupil premium is used effectively and the gap between these students and all students in the college is closing year-on-year.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress because staff know their needs well. Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to provide support that ensures students learn new skills and become more confident learners.
- Students develop secure literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills so that they are well prepared for the next stage of education. Those entering the college with weaker reading skills are targeted quickly and the good support, including for sixth form students, helps to accelerate their skills.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is good. From below average attainment on entry students make good progress and reach average attainment in most subjects. Overall achievement in Year 13 is particularly strong, especially in sciences and mathematics. Progress in Year 12 is good overall, especially in vocational subjects. Following a dip in results at AS in 2011, the college has tackled a small number of weaker subjects and results in 2012 have improved.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection and good teaching helps most students to make at least good progress. The college recognises the need to develop teachers' skills further so that more teaching is outstanding.
- Students enjoy learning because in most lessons there is a clear purpose, they take an active part in group work and pair work and tackle challenging tasks that match their needs well.
- Teachers have high expectations of students, including more-able students. In an outstanding Year 9 English lesson, more-able students analysed the text of *Animal Farm* closely and worked on highly challenging tasks aimed at good GCSE grades. They relished the pace and challenge of the lesson.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very supportive, based on mutual respect and a very high level of commitment from staff to support learning. Students appreciate the support that teachers give to them lesson-by-lesson but also when they need extra support outside lesson time to help them to catch up or understand difficult concepts.
- Teachers have secure knowledge of their subject. They recognise students' misconceptions and their good questioning helps students to rethink or consider problems more deeply. In most lessons learning moves on at a good pace. Healthy debate is encouraged in pair,

group and classwork and students develop as confident communicators.

- Assessment of progress is accurate and frequent and the college tracking systems help teachers to recognise when students are in danger of falling behind. Students are given clear targets for grades and levels so that they are well aware of what they are trying to attain. Students' written work is usually marked regularly and helpfully so that they know what they must improve. In the best practice students are expected to respond to the guidance and demonstrate how they have made improvements.
- Teaching is held back from being outstanding because in occasional lessons the level of challenge provided for more-able students is not high enough and they do not always know what they must do to reach very challenging targets. In a few lessons there is not enough emphasis on developing students' communication and literacy skills. A few staff are not fully confident in enabling students to participate in pair and group work where they have to think carefully, work independently and solve problems.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure. Staff plan challenging tasks and use questioning very skilfully to develop students' thinking so that complexities become accessible. There are many opportunities for students to act as an extra learning resource for each other. These features were evident in the way the teacher led students through challenging mathematical problems in an outstanding lesson. Students tackled highly challenging problems collaboratively and with growing confidence as the teacher gave individual support and practical guidance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved since the previous inspection. A revised policy for managing behaviour alongside improved teaching and a curriculum that enables students to follow their interests have all supported improvements.
- Most students conduct themselves well and have no difficulty in rising to the high expectations the college expects. There is a strong mutual respect between staff and students and students are courteous and polite to visitors.
- In most lessons, students behave well, are keen to learn and enjoy working with their fellow students on challenging tasks. Very occasionally, when lesson activities are less stimulating, students do not concentrate so well and their attention is easily diverted from the focus of the lesson.
- Students feel very safe and secure in college. The curriculum provides them with a good understanding of how to stay safe in the wider world and they know about different types of bullying. Students say there is no bullying in the college and that they have confidence that staff will help sort out any problems they might face.
- Students' attendance has improved a great deal since the previous inspection and is now above average.
- Students in the sixth form feel valued and have a very mature approach to study. They are proactive in their support for others in the main college, for example, leading assemblies and supporting students in improving their reading skills.
- Case studies demonstrate how a few students with very specific social, behavioural and/or emotional needs have been very well supported by the college so that they have settled down well and learned how to manage their own learning and personal development and improve their academic progress.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are highly ambitious for the college and have pursued improvement relentlessly and effectively since the previous inspection. They have set high expectations of staff and are well supported by middle leaders. Accurate self-evaluation and tightly focused improvement planning have

underpinned improvements in achievement, behaviour, attendance, the quality of teaching and the curriculum. The capacity to improve further is secure.

- Improvements have been brought about within a highly supportive and caring environment where staff know individual students well and go that 'extra mile' to ensure that students have the help they need to become independent and successful learners.
 - The curriculum has been carefully developed to match students' interests and needs and support their progress into the next stage of education.
 - Senior leaders are very clearly focused on and successful in improving teaching. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the performance of staff and well-focused professional development meet college and individual needs. These have supported considerable improvements in teaching.
 - As new arrangements for the appraisal of staff performance are introduced, there is even greater emphasis on the impact of teaching on students' progress. The college recognises the need to move what is often good teaching on to the next level. However, there is not yet sufficient emphasis on this within the professional development activities of the college.
 - Sixth form leaders are closely focused on caring and supporting the progress and well-being of individual students. Leaders know what needs to be done and have clear plans to bring about further improvements. They lead by exemplifying at least good practice.
 - The local authority provides 'light touch' support for this college because leaders have the expertise and confidence to support improvements in teaching and learning across many areas of the curriculum.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - is proactive and challenges the leadership of the college with rigour
 - takes its monitoring role seriously and spends time in the college finding out how the college works
 - is well-informed by senior leaders of the performance of the college overall and of the contribution of staff to its overall effectiveness
 - undertakes appropriate training to support its role in the strategic development of the college.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupil's needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupil's needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	119798
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	401876

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	918
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Rycroft
Headteacher	Brendan Conboy
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2009
Telephone number	01524 66689
Fax number	01524 849441
Email address	head@olcc.lancs.sch.uk

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