

St Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College

Erdington Road, Aldridge, Walsall, WS9 0RN

Inspection dates 16–17 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- By the end of Year 11, attainment is above average in almost all subjects, which represents good progress from students' starting points.
- As a result of good, enthusiastic teaching and very positive relationships, students enjoy school, want to do well, and make good progress in their learning.
- The development of students' literacy and numeracy skills is good. Most students make good or better progress in these areas.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Students are immensely proud of their school and feel safe. They are respectful and courteous and this contributes to the purposeful and calm atmosphere in lessons and around the school.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students value the range and variety of opportunities that are available to them.
- The headteacher and her senior leadership team are uncompromising in their drive for improvement. They have high expectations for all aspects of the school's work. They have successfully raised the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- The governors are well informed. They are dedicated to improving standards and provide appropriately high levels of support and challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not yet high enough. In some lessons, work is not pitched at the right level for everyone in the class.
- The sixth form requires improvement because there is too much variation in students' achievement across different subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, six of which were seen together with senior staff. They examined students' books, talked to students about their work, and heard students read in lessons.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, four groups of students, three representatives from the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 118 parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and 49 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed a wide range of documents, including the school's own data on students' recent examination results and current progress; its self-evaluation records and development plan; information on the work of staff, training arrangements for teachers and other staff; checks on teaching, students' behaviour and attendance; responses to parent and student surveys it had conducted; the safeguarding of students; and details of governance.

Inspection team

Ann Behan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Cliff Mainey

Additional Inspector

Robert Ridout

Additional Inspector

Roisin Chambers

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College is a larger than average-sized comprehensive school. Over 98% of students are baptised Roman Catholics. There are more girls than boys in the school.
- The school has a specialism in technology.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are below national averages.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and students known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below the national average, whilst the proportion of students supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- One student at Key Stage 4 is educated away from the school site for part of the week.
- The school has a specialist resource unit supporting students with dyslexia. At the time of the inspection, 13 students were on roll.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement further by ensuring that a higher proportion of teaching is outstanding by making sure that all teachers:
 - plan learning activities that provide suitable challenge, more precisely matching the needs and abilities of all students
 - carefully and consistently check the progress of students in the sixth form to ensure support is quickly and effectively put in place for anyone who is underachieving.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- GCSE attainment results for a number of measures are significantly above national figures. There was a dip in the proportion of students gaining A* to C passes in English in 2012 and this affected the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. However, assessments for current Year 11 students, including results from early examination entries, show that attainment for both English and mathematics has improved significantly. This represents good achievement given the students' above-average starting points.
- The school has an early-entry policy for mathematics that allows groups of students to take GCSE examinations early, and those students who do not achieve their expected grades are given further opportunities to re-take the examination. This has had a positive impact on results in mathematics, with more students achieving a grade C or higher by the end of Year 11.
- Disabled students, those who have special educational needs, and those educated in the special resource unit progress as well as other groups because the school provides additional support that is tailored to meet their particular needs. They benefit from small-group and one-to-one teaching, and in-class support from specialist teaching assistants. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language do well and their progress is at least as good as that of other students in the school because of well-targeted support.
- The Key Stage 4 student who studies off-site makes good progress because of good-quality, well-tailored provision.
- The school makes good use of the pupil premium to provide extra support to help eligible students. They attain in line with similar students across the country in English, and significantly better than similar students in mathematics. They attain approximately a grade lower than other students in the school in English, and half a grade lower in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4. Current school records show that pupil premium students are making good progress, in line with other groups, and in-school gaps are narrowing.
- School records on students known to be eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium show that they make good progress in developing their basic skills in numeracy and literacy because of effective teaching and support that they receive.
- Students enter the sixth form with attainment broadly in line with students nationally. They achieve well in some subjects but their achievement requires improvement in others. The school has recently introduced a more rigorous system for monitoring students' progress and targeting additional support. Current assessment records show that this is having a positive effect on achievement.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and there are examples of outstanding practice. No inadequate teaching was observed, although a small number of lessons still require improvement.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers plan and set work that is challenging and provide a variety of activities to engage students' interest. This was seen in a Year 9 geography lesson where students were investigating the differences between the most and least economically developed countries. The teacher had planned timed activities which gave students opportunities to compete in groups, present ideas orally and in writing, work independently and collaboratively, peer assess, and reflect on their own and others' views. The teacher's expectations were high, she challenged the students to do better, and their progress was outstanding.
- A small number of lessons still require improvement. In these lessons, teachers do not always plan lessons that are at the right level to meet all students' needs or that capture and maintain students' interest, and there are missed opportunities to challenge students to achieve at the highest levels.

- Support for disabled students, those who have special educational needs, and those who are eligible for pupil premium is consistently good. Their progress is checked regularly and extra help is provided when it is needed. Additional adults are used effectively to help these students and as a result they make at least good progress.
- Improving marking has been a focus for the school and most marking gives students clear guidance about what they need to do to improve their work. The best marking seen gives consistently good feedback from the teacher, and shows students responding to advice. Students have good opportunities to assess their own and other students' work.
- The school has good systems for checking students' progress and for quickly providing support for those who may be falling behind. However, until recently these systems have not been consistently applied across all subjects in the sixth form.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students have outstanding attitudes to learning. They behave very well, show high levels of cooperation, respect and courtesy, and work well with each other and their teachers. This creates a very positive learning environment.
- Students say that they feel safe and are proud to be part of a caring community. They appreciate that staff are there to help and support them. They are aware of different kinds of bullying, including racist behaviour and homophobia. They told inspectors that incidents of bullying or poor behaviour are rare and, when they occur, are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- In assemblies, tutor time and lessons, teachers give students a good understanding of how to stay safe. They cover a variety of themes about the importance of healthy lifestyles and the dangers and adverse effects of drugs and substance abuse.
- Students are encouraged to use modern technology safely and are well informed about the dangers of the internet and cyber-bullying.
- Attendance is above average and the levels of exclusions are low. Punctuality to school and to lessons is excellent, showing students' commitment to learning. The school has been active in reducing persistent absence.
- Sixth-form students provide good role models for younger students and make many positive contributions to the school community.
- The majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire feel that students are safe, well behaved and well cared for, and that the school deals with any bullying effectively.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led and managed, including the sixth form and the special resourced provision for students with dyslexia. The headteacher is determined and relentless in her focus on improvement. She is driven in her passionate belief that all students are entitled to the best possible education, and she is well supported by the senior leadership team.
- Staff morale is high. All responses to the staff questionnaire were positive. One member of staff wrote 'I am very proud to teach here, there is a real sense of community that unites staff and students.' Another wrote 'This is a very caring community where we strive to do our best by the children and one another.'
- There are good systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Joint observations with members of the senior leadership team confirmed the accuracy of their judgements about the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching. Senior leaders have rightly recognised the need for them to ensure teachers consistently plan work that consistently challenges all groups of pupils to make even better progress and also by ensuring teachers identify quickly any students who are underachieving in the sixth form.
- Senior staff meet regularly with teachers and middle leaders to discuss progress towards meeting annual objectives, and training has been closely linked to improving skills in teaching,

and improving the leadership and management skills of middle leaders. Underperformance is dealt with quickly and salary increases are not awarded unless performance over time warrants them.

- The curriculum provides a good mix of subjects to meet different students' needs, including those linked to the school's specialism of technology. Through strong links with local primary schools, local businesses, colleges of further education and universities, the school provides students with good support when they enter the school and excellent information about the opportunities that are open to them when they are ready to leave.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school, shown in their exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes. Students appreciate the range of enrichment activities and after-school clubs that are available to them and their personal and spiritual development is nurtured throughout their schooling. The school is effective at ensuring the equality of opportunity for all students, in fostering good relationships within the community and in tackling any form of discrimination robustly.
- Additional funding received through the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up programme is used sensibly to make sure that students get the help that they need.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are excellent, including those for students educated off-site.
- There is a positive working relationship between the school and the local authority. The local authority provides light-touch support which includes an annual review of the school's performance, and support for newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met. Governors are knowledgeable, including about the quality of teaching, and have a good understanding of how well the school is performing. Through the training that they have received, they are able to analyse outcomes of examination performance compared to those of similar schools nationally, and are involved fully in linking staff pay awards to the effectiveness of their teaching. They monitor expenditure closely, including the way pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up money is spent, and ensure that financial and other resources are used effectively to improve the quality of students' education.

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 pupils' 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 pupils' 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	104255
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	412040

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
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	1094
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father David Mellor
Headteacher	Philomena Mullins
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 November 2006
Telephone number	01922 740300
Fax number	01922 740330
Email address	postbox@stfrancis.cc

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', 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.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.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 assesses 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 educational 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 St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

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

© Crown copyright 2013

