



Office for Standards
in Education

Savio Catholic High School: Sixth Form

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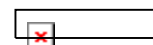
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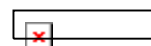
Basic information about the school



Name of school:	Savio Catholic High School
Type of school:	Comprehensive
Status:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Headteacher:	Fr J F Mageean
Address of school:	Netherton Way Bootle Merseyside L30 2NA

Telephone:	0151 521 3088
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mr T Lawless
Local education authority area:	Sefton
Learning and Skills Council:	Greater Merseyside
Unique reference number:	104959
Name of reporting inspector:	Mrs J Jones HMI
Dates of inspection:	10-11 March 2004

Introduction



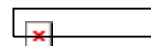
1. Savio Catholic High School is situated in Bootle on Merseyside. It is smaller than average but the number of pupils has risen over the last few years; there are now 824 on roll. The sixth form is also smaller than average; there are 61 students of whom 35 are in Year 12 and 26 in Year 13. The school is located on the edge of its catchment area so that many pupils have some distance to travel to school. The community served by the school experiences considerable social and economic deprivation; 41 per cent of the pupils aged 11 to 16, and 28 per cent of the sixth-form students, are eligible for free school meals. Both figures are well above average. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school has been rising over the last few years and is close to average. An above-average proportion, 25 per cent, has been identified as having special educational needs. The students' attainment on entry to the advanced courses in the sixth form is below average overall.

2. The school was inspected in March 2002. The sixth form was judged to be inadequate because it had significant weaknesses in one or more areas of its activities for students over compulsory school age.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues for the sixth form from the inspection of March 2002 and the sixth form was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on four occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In March 2004, two HMI inspected the sixth form, assessing the quality of education provided and the progress made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2002.

Main findings



5. In accordance with paragraph 1(2) of schedule 7 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, I am of the opinion that the school's sixth form is no longer inadequate, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its students. The main findings of the inspection are:

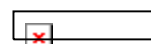
- standards of attainment in the sixth form are well below average when compared to all sixth forms in maintained schools. In 2003, the results attained by the small cohort of Year 13 students in the level 3 courses (AVCE, AS and A level) were slightly weaker overall than those attained in 2002. The students' average total points score fell to 171.3, which was well below the national figure of 263.3;

- the achievement of the Year 13 students in the level 3 examinations varied from subject to subject; it was strongest in sociology, English literature and history, and poor in computing. One third of the students made good progress overall in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE, one third made just satisfactory progress and the progress of the remaining third was unsatisfactory;
- standards attained by the Year 12 students at AS level in 2003 were well below average overall, but varied between subjects. Pass rates were best in English literature, sociology and history, and they were poor in computing. Standards attained in the level 2 GNVQ course in leisure and tourism were well below average;
- standards attained in lessons were below average. Although the students' achievement was broadly satisfactory, their progress was impeded by their weak basic skills, particularly in speaking and writing;
- the students' behaviour was good and their attitudes to learning were satisfactory. They worked hard in lessons and were keen to do well; many sought help or clarification appropriately but rarely initiated questions. Where the students were encouraged to take the lead, they were beginning to assume responsibility for their own learning;
- attendance has improved significantly over the last two years, but remains below average. To date this year, the attendance rate is about 90 per cent;
- the school's Catholic ethos pervades its work. It provides the students with a secure, caring environment that reflects its Salesian traditions. The students' moral and social development is good. The teachers make the most of opportunities to promote moral values and give time for reflection in lessons and in the day-to-day work of the school;
- the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall. It was very good in one lesson, good in nine, satisfactory in ten and unsatisfactory in two. Strengths of the teaching included the teachers' subject knowledge that informed the planning, and the advice given to students about examination demands and techniques. An improving feature of the teaching was the use of a range of activities and resources that drew on different learning styles. Some teachers organised effective pair and group discussions and supported students in making thought-provoking presentations to the rest of the class. In the weaker lessons, the teachers dominated the talking and expected too little of the students;
- the quality of learning lagged behind the teaching but was just satisfactory overall. It was good in seven lessons, satisfactory in eleven and unsatisfactory in four. The students worked industriously and collaborated well when working in pairs or small groups. However, many students lacked confidence and could not work independently and were therefore heavily reliant upon their teachers. Only the most skilful teachers have been able to promote the students' personal development so that they could engage fully with the opportunities for learning;
- the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The range of courses is too narrow for the varied ability of the students who tend to tailor their aspirations to the courses offered. There are few courses that have a vocational element. There is only one course at Level 2 and no provision for the development of key skills, in particular in communication. The introduction of supervised study periods has been a positive feature and has helped to promote more effective study habits. Progress in developing a wider curriculum has been slow over the last two years, and has recently stalled while the school and the local education authority (LEA) await the outcomes of the Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council's strategic area review of post-16 provision. No effective links have been made with other institutions;
- the use of assessment in the sixth form has improved and is satisfactory with some strengths, including in the marking of assignments;
- the students are well supported by their teachers and the assistant learning mentors during their time in the sixth form. They are guided towards the most appropriate course from the limited options available but their immaturity as learners makes the transition from GCSE to Level 3 courses difficult;
- the current arrangements for the leadership and management of the sixth form by the deputy headteacher and senior tutor are satisfactory, but weaknesses remain in

strategic planning. A lack of urgency was a feature of the leadership and management of the sixth form for too long; for example, while senior staff recognised the need to introduce a broader curriculum, little has been done to achieve it over the last two years. The sixth form operates smoothly; day-to-day routines are well established. Under the leadership of the deputy headteacher, recent improvements have been made in some of the areas of weaknesses identified in the inspection report of March 2002;

- procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school have improved recently but the outcomes do not link sufficiently into a routine cycle of planning, action, monitoring, evaluation and review. The headteacher's self-evaluation identified some strengths in the provision but few of the weaknesses. There was insufficient use of data to support the assertions made;
- the governing body is supportive of the school and committed to improving the sixth form, including through representation on the sixth-form support group. However, it has been too dependent in the past upon the information provided by the headteacher and did not interrogate it sufficiently to hold the school to account for the standards attained and the quality of education provided;
- despite reviewing entry requirements and reducing the number of uneconomic courses, the sixth form continues to provide unsatisfactory value for money;
- the LEA has recently adopted a more visible and proactive role in monitoring the effectiveness of the school's actions to ensure that the sixth form makes the necessary improvement; this intervention strategy has borne fruit. The LEA had previously allowed the sixth form to make slow progress, particularly in relation to strategic planning.

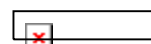
Key issues



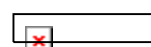
6. In order to improve the students' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- improve strategic leadership;
- raise standards of attainment;
- widen the curriculum so that it meets the needs of all the students;
- develop the students' capacity to learn independently.

Inspection findings



Standards achieved by the pupils



7. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are well below average when compared to sixth forms in maintained schools. In 2003, the results attained by the small cohort of Year 13 students in the level 3 courses (AVCE, AS and A level) were slightly weaker overall than those attained in 2002. The

The Year 13 students' overall pass rate on the level three courses was 69.5 per cent, which is about 20 per cent lower than the national figure. The figures mask some significant gender differences; the girls' results were significantly better than the boys', and by a greater margin than that shown by national data. Pass rates were best in English literature, sociology, history and art; they were unsatisfactory in general studies and poor in computing. Very few students attained the higher A and B grades; the one student taking French was awarded grade A.

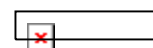
8. The achievement of the Year 13 students in the Level 3 examinations in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE varied from subject to subject; it was strongest in sociology, English literature and history, and poor in computing. One third of the students made good progress overall, one third made just satisfactory progress and the progress of the remaining third was unsatisfactory.

9. Standards attained by the Year 12 students at AS level in 2003 were well below average overall and showed variation between subjects similar to that noted above. The overall pass rate was 54 per cent, not including general studies where the pass rate was 45 per cent. None of the ten students passed the AS examination in computing. In the level 2 GNVQ course in leisure and tourism, the results were well below average, with only four of the ten students attaining a pass grade.

10. The results of the external examinations taken in January 2004 represented satisfactory achievement overall. Ten Year 13 students took unit examinations and, in most cases, this led to improved AS grades in sociology, mathematics and English literature. Most of the students studying the VCE course in information and communication technology (ICT) attained a pass grade in the unit taken. All of the students following the GNVQ course in leisure and tourism passed one unit; most passed two.

11. Standards attained in lessons were below average overall and, although the students' achievement was broadly satisfactory, their progress was impeded by their weak basic skills, particularly in speaking and writing.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development



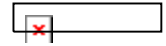
12. The students' behaviour was good and their attitudes to learning were satisfactory. They worked hard in lessons and were keen to do well; many sought help or clarification appropriately but rarely initiated questions. While they demonstrated positive attitudes, they lacked the confidence to try things for themselves and were too dependent upon the teachers' support and guidance. Where the students were encouraged to take the lead, they were beginning to assume responsibility for their own learning.

13. Attendance has improved significantly over the last two years, but remains below average. The attendance rate for the sixth form for 2002-03 was 89 per cent, which represented an improvement of six percentage points over the figure for 2001-02. To date this year the attendance rate is about 90 per cent. The school collects relevant attendance data and analyses it appropriately to identify patterns in the attendance of individuals. Students whose attendance causes concern are interviewed and targets for improvement are set. Form tutors are sensitive to the difficulties faced by some students in their home circumstances, but they consistently emphasise the need for good attendance, making the important link between attendance and achievement. Appropriate records are maintained for attendance at the supervised private study periods; there remains too much absence, but it is followed up.

14. The school's Catholic ethos pervades its work. It provides the students with a secure, caring environment underpinned by Salesian traditions and philosophy of education. The students' moral and social development is good. The teachers make the most of opportunities to promote moral values and give time for reflection in lessons and in the day-to-day work of the school; for example,

in a religious education lesson, the students were exploring issues of prejudice that affect people who have positive HIV status. The students are encouraged to consider their own lives and aspirations and how these relate to other human beings in different countries or circumstances. The students' views and interests are represented through the sixth-form council, but within the wider school community, the role of the sixth-form students is underdeveloped.

The quality of education



15. The quality of teaching was satisfactory overall. It was very good in one lesson, good in nine, satisfactory in ten and unsatisfactory in two. Strengths of the teaching included the teachers' subject knowledge that informed the planning, and the advice given to students about examination demands and techniques. There was appropriate emphasis on subject-specific language, but not all the teachers ensured that the students had fluent recall and understanding of technical terms. An improving feature of the teaching was the use of a range of activities and resources that drew on different learning styles. In the better lessons, the teachers had high expectations of the contributions to be made by all the students and they used questioning effectively to pursue and extend their knowledge and understanding. Some teachers organised effective pair and group discussions and supported students in making thought-provoking presentations to the rest of the class; for example, in sociology and the extension course in media.

16. In the weaker lessons, including some that were satisfactory overall, the teachers dominated the talking and expected too little of the students. As a result, the students became passive and dependent on the teachers' direction.

17. The quality of learning lagged behind the teaching but was just satisfactory overall. It was good in seven lessons, satisfactory in eleven and unsatisfactory in four. The students worked industriously and collaborated well when working in pairs or small groups. However, many students lacked confidence and had weak independent learning skills and were therefore heavily reliant upon their teachers. Many were reticent when discussing their work, and had difficulty articulating their ideas or explaining their reasoning. Only the most skilful teachers have been able to promote the students' personal development so that they could engage fully with the opportunities for learning. The students' files of work varied widely; some were organised well and had good quality notes and other supporting materials, while others were a more haphazard collection of papers that equip them poorly for independent study.

18. The curriculum is unsatisfactory. The range of courses is too narrow for the varied ability of the students, who tend to tailor their aspirations to the courses offered. There are few courses that have a vocational element, although the introduction of the BTEC National course in sports studies and the change from the unsuccessful AS and A-level courses in computing to the more practical AVCE course in ICT have brought some improvement at Level 3. The general studies course has been dropped following a review of the provision and results. There is only one course at Level 2 and no provision for the development of key skills, in particular in communication; for example, the systematic teaching of the skills needed for oral presentations. The introduction of supervised study periods has been a positive feature and has helped to promote more effective study habits. The programme of enrichment courses has improved; the involvement of outside agencies has the potential to widen the students' horizons. A religious education course for all students has recently been introduced; it is based on units of work that are generally relevant to their lives. Progress in developing a wider curriculum has been slow over the last two years, and has recently stalled while the school and the LEA await the outcomes of the Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council's strategic area review of post-16 provision. Despite some discussions, the school has made no effective links with other institutions that have resulted in greater curricular choice for the students at Savio Catholic High School.

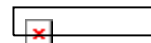
19. The quality of the accommodation has improved and is satisfactory. The sixth-form students

have good access to the city learning centre; this provides good quality ICT provision, including its use for independent study. The recent improvements to the facilities in the students' common room are appreciated by the students. However, the environment elsewhere in the school often lacks a sixth-form dimension, and resources other than the ICT provision in the city learning centre are more limited.

20. The use of assessment in the sixth form has improved and is satisfactory with some strengths. The students have been set end-of-course targets for each subject, and the first review of their progress against the targets has recently been carried out. The school is setting up a database to allow assessment data to be collated and to help teachers and form tutors to monitor the students' progress. The quality of marking of assignments and guidance for improvement are an emerging strength in a number of subjects; for example, the students studying business were provided with good advice, including reference to marking criteria and grade descriptors.

21. The students are well supported by their teachers and the assistant learning mentors during their time in the sixth form. Retention rates are satisfactory overall. Staff know the students well and relationships are good; the students are fiercely loyal to the school. The arrangements and guidance for the completion of applications to university have improved. Twenty-one of the students have applied, and all have received offers of places conditional on their results in the summer. The pupils in Year 11 are provided with information about post-16 courses at the school and in other local schools and colleges. The process of applying to stay on into the school's sixth form has been improved. Most of the 86 pupils currently in Year 11 who have applied for places in the sixth form, together with their parents, have been interviewed and their proposed courses discussed. They are guided towards the most appropriate course from the limited options available. However, their immaturity as learners makes the transition to level 3 courses difficult.

Leadership and management



22. The current arrangements for the leadership and management of the sixth form by the deputy headteacher and senior tutor are satisfactory, but weaknesses remain in medium and longer-term strategic planning. In particular, planning for the anticipated increase in sixth-form numbers next September is insufficiently advanced, and limited progress has been made in developing and articulating a longer-term vision for post-16 provision and determining the pathway to achieving it. A lack of urgency has been a feature of the leadership and management of the sixth form for too long; for example, while senior staff recognise the need to introduce a broader curriculum, little has been done to achieve it over the last two years.

23. The sixth-form operates smoothly. The senior tutor is effective in his role; day-to-day routines are well-established resulting in greater consistency of practice. The deputy headteacher assumed responsibility for the leadership of the sixth form following the sudden death in service of the head of sixth form in September 2003. She had a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth-form provision at that time, and under her leadership, recent improvements have been made in some of the areas of weaknesses identified in the inspection report of March 2002. A number of positive developments in the sixth form, supported by the LEA advisers and consultants, have aided the implementation of whole-school initiatives, such as the teaching and learning policy.

24. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the sixth form have improved recently. Sixth-form lessons and tutor periods have been observed; this has led to some changes, including the separation of the two year groups for the weekly tutor period. However, the outcomes of monitoring do not link sufficiently into a routine cycle of planning, action, monitoring, evaluation and review. The headteacher's self-evaluation identified some strengths of the provision, but few of the weaknesses; it was often descriptive rather than evaluative. There was insufficient use of data to support the assertions made; for example, the sixth form was reported to provide very good value for money. A number of the areas identified by the headteacher as requiring improvement have

been acknowledged for some time, but have not been reflected in effective strategic planning.

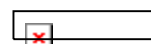
25. The governing body is supportive of the school and committed to improving the sixth form. The chair of governors chaired the meetings of the sixth-form support group, which initially comprised senior school staff and advisers from the LEA, and lately involved more governors. The governing body has increased its monitoring of the work of the school and is beginning to ask more challenging questions of the headteacher and senior managers. However, it has been too dependent in the past upon the information provided by the headteacher and did not interrogate it sufficiently to hold the school to account for the standards attained and the quality of education provided.

26. The Archdiocese of Liverpool is also committed to improving the sixth-form provision. Its principal activities have been in providing support for the headteacher and senior managers, and meeting with other parties, including the local Learning and Skills Council and the LEA.

27. Despite reviewing entry requirements and reducing the number of uneconomic courses, the sixth form continues to provide unsatisfactory value for money. The LEA's recent audit shows clearly the high costs of the sixth form. The governing body and the school were previously ill-informed about the precise costs of the provision. The anticipated increase in the number of sixth-form students next year may reduce the costs per student, but the projected costs and requirements of the larger cohort, including the demands on staffing, resources and accommodation, have not been fully considered.

28. The LEA has recently adopted a more visible and proactive role in monitoring the effectiveness of the school's actions to ensure that the sixth form makes the necessary progress; this intervention strategy has borne fruit. It had previously allowed the sixth form to drift for too long, particularly in relation to strategic planning. Although the LEA has consistently offered support to senior managers, weaknesses in the school's leadership and management meant that the school was not well placed to identify where specific LEA support might prove effective. Moreover, the school did not readily embrace the support offered. Although the sixth-form support group provided a forum for discussion between the governing body, senior managers and the LEA's advisers, a lack of rigorous monitoring and evaluation meant it was insufficiently well informed to be an effective vehicle for rapid improvement.

Implementation of the action plan



29. The inspection report of March 2002 required the school to address five key issues in relation to the sixth-form provision. These required improvements in: leadership and management; the quality of learning outside lessons; attendance; the provision for mathematics; and the cost-effectiveness of sixth-form provision. Overall, reasonable progress has been made in bringing about the improvements but there is still work to do, particularly in developing effective strategic leadership.

30. The leadership and management provided by the deputy headteacher and senior tutor are satisfactory. Weaknesses in leadership and management hindered progress for too long but the current arrangements brought impetus and a more rigorous approach to improvement. Monitoring and evaluation are becoming established, and appropriate action is taken to address issues that emerge. There remain weaknesses in strategic planning.

31. The provision for students' development and learning outside their chosen courses has improved. The assistant learning mentors provide good support and guidance for the students through supervised study periods and often in the wider work of the sixth form. The structure and planning of the enrichment courses have improved; the school intends that students should be able

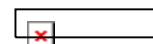
to gain national accreditation for the courses if they wish. There are good opportunities for students to use their ICT skills for independent learning, but there remains no planned provision for developing the students' literacy, oracy and study skills.

32. Attendance has improved significantly over the last two years but, at 90 per cent, remains below average. The school collects and analyses attendance data and follows up absence appropriately. Attendance at the supervised study periods is more rigorously monitored and has improved.

33. There has been good improvement in the provision for mathematics. Stricter pre-requisites for advanced-level study in mathematics have helped to ensure that students are better equipped to meet the demands of the course. The teachers have changed the combination of units studied to provide a course that is more relevant to the needs of the students. There is a good level of professional dialogue between the teachers; the team-teaching initiative has brought about improvements in teaching and learning styles. Assessment is effective; the students are well informed about what they need to do to improve.

34. The school has reduced the number of uneconomic courses; no classes in Year 12 had fewer than five students at the beginning of the year. Nevertheless, there are small classes in many subjects and the costs per student remain too high. No effective links have been made with other providers and there is now a hiatus while the school and LEA await the outcome of the Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council's strategic area review.

Appendix - Information about the inspection



The sixth form was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in March 2002. The inspection judged that, in accordance with paragraph 1(2) of schedule 7 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the sixth form was inadequate because it had significant weaknesses in one or more areas of its activities for students over compulsory school age.

The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues for the sixth form from the inspection of March 2002. The sixth form was visited by HMI in October 2002, and in February, July and November 2003 to assess the progress it was making to implement its sixth-form action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of March 2002.

In March 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the sixth form for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected.

Twenty two lessons or parts of lessons and one registration session were inspected. The students were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, a group of students, the chair and members of the governing body, a representative from the archdiocese, and three representatives from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other staff and students. A wide range of the sixth form's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided in the sixth form and the progress the sixth form has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2002 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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