



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection Report

ARCHBISHOP BLANCH CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY AIDED HIGH SCHOOL AND TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Unique Reference Number: 104705
LEA: Liverpool

Inspection Dates: 22 – 24 June 2004
Reporting Inspector: Jeremy Richardson HMI

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was
deemed section 12 (3) under the same act

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INTRODUCTION

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of Archbishop Blanch Church of England Voluntary Aided High School and Technology College and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by six of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Very good
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Adequate
Grade 4	Not adequate

Description of the school

Archbishop Blanch Church of England Voluntary Aided High School in Liverpool is a specialist Technology College with Beacon school status. There are just under 900 girls on roll, including a sixth form of about 140 students. Just over 13 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is in line with the national figure. Most pupils enter the school having achieved broadly average results in their primary schools. The number of pupils who have special educational needs is below average. Around 10 per cent of the pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds; no pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Archbishop Blanch is a good school with a good reputation. It is welcoming and promotes high standards. The pupils feel very safe, secure and happy. The teaching is good and pupils make good progress. Standards are well above average in Key Stages 3 and 4 and average in the sixth form. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. Care, guidance and support for the pupils are strengths of the school and reflect its Christian ethos. The school is continuing to develop its curriculum, including collaborative arrangements to extend choices in the sixth form. The school benefits from good leadership and has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. It provides good value for money.

Grade: 2

Effectiveness of the school's sixth form

The quality of provision is good. Teaching is good and assessment is rigorous. The students receive high quality care, guidance and support. Personal development is very good. Leaders set a clear direction and manage provision well. Standards and achievement have improved since the previous report and there is good capacity for further improvement. The students who continue into sixth form achieve grades that would be expected from their Key Stage 4 results. Strategic plans to introduce collaborative arrangements with other schools are good and well set to improve achievement.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. The new headteacher has built on previous achievements, brought fresh ideas and refined the approach to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Standards have continued to improve since the last inspection in line with, and sometimes above, national trends.

Grade: 2

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity for further improvement is good. Its self-evaluation identifies strengths and weaknesses accurately and the headteacher is aware of the need to continue to strengthen the senior management team in order to implement strategic plans with rigour and consistency. Governors are clearly focused on improving provision and they hold managers to account for the quality of their performance.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

This good school knows what needs to be done to raise standards even higher. In particular, it should concentrate on improving:

- standards and achievement in the sixth form
- teaching so that it is consistently challenging for all groups of pupils and activities are matched closely to their needs
- accommodation in some areas.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

Inspectors endorse the school's view that standards and achievement overall are good. At Key Stage 4, standards have improved greatly since the previous inspection, with 77% of the pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C in 2003. These are the school's best ever results. This figure is well above the national average. The results at Key Stages 3 and 4 are very high in comparison with schools in similar local contexts and generally represent well above average progress by pupils. The school has correctly identified that in some subjects fewer pupils than expected attain the highest grades and that their progress from Key Stage 3 to 4 in science is below that in most other subjects. Since the last inspection, standards in the sixth form have risen in most subjects and are now average overall. Not all students continue into the sixth form, and, although relatively few students gain the highest grades, progress is as expected. A level results in the past show that progress in the sixth form has been adequate. However, the results for vocational qualifications in business and in health and social care exceed expectations and the gains that pupils make during lessons are good, indicating an improvement in the rate of progress. Responses in lessons show that improvement is on an upward trend and some students have the potential to make even greater progress.

Grade: 2

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Inspectors agree with the school's view that the personal development of the pupils is very good. The attendance rate at the school is high and punctuality is very good. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is also very good and its promotion has recently been further enhanced through the development of individual pupil behaviour plans. The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions is low. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work and this helps to ensure they make good progress and achieve high standards. They demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility for their behaviour and a high level of commitment to learning. The overall high quality of the pupils' personal development reflects the determination of the school to promote very positive values and attitudes.

The pupils respond positively to the opportunities provided for spiritual, moral, social, cultural and physical development. They engage very enthusiastically with the many opportunities, both academic and non-academic, to participate in a wide range of sporting, social, charity and cultural activities. Pupils and sixth-form students exercise high levels of responsibility through a variety of school activities.

Pupils' relationships with their peers, teachers and other adults are very good and reflect the school's commitment to the development of maturity and responsibility. Pupils contribute very effectively to school life and take advantage of the opportunities to become involved as active citizens in local and wider community projects.

Grade: 1

QUALITY OF PROVISION

The school judges the quality of provision to be good overall. Inspectors agree.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject. They have established efficient routines that use time and resources well. The quality of learning is also good. Pupils are well motivated and respond promptly to questioning from teachers. However, teachers' use of questions provides little opportunity for pupils to show any deeper understanding of the subject. Students make particularly good progress when given the opportunity to discuss and explore ideas amongst themselves and take responsibility for their learning.

Teaching and planning do not always meet the different needs of the pupils accurately, and assessment is not always well used to inform planning. Inspectors endorse the school's view that some teachers do this very well but it is not widespread across the school. There is a good system for setting annual targets based on the pupils' prior attainment and monitoring their progress towards these targets. This process effectively identifies pupils in need of further support and motivates them well.

The curriculum is good. It offers a wide range of examination courses. It is broad and balanced. Vocational courses have been introduced at Key Stage 4 and these are enabling more pupils to achieve qualifications and develop personal skills. There are good plans for collaborative arrangements to extend provision in the sixth form. The school has improved its auditing and support for numeracy across the curriculum, a weakness at the time of the previous inspection. The accelerated literacy programme is contributing to higher standards, but literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum are not always firmly embedded in lessons. Provision for ICT and design and technology has improved but still does not meet statutory requirements. Plans to resolve this are well underway. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in music and sport. Pupils value these activities which make a good contribution to their personal development.

The school has rightly judged the quality of its provision for the care and well-being of its pupils to be very good. It reflects the school's Christian ethos. Secure and well-understood procedures permeate the daily life of the school ensuring boundaries are clear and pupils feel very safe, secure and happy. The pastoral and careers guidance arrangements are very effective. There are very good arrangements to provide pupils with high quality advice and guidance to safeguard their welfare, promote personal development and well-being, and help them to achieve well. The learning mentors make an outstanding contribution to this provision. The arrangements to support pupils with special educational needs are very good. Pupils at risk and looked-after children are also well supported by the school. Careful attention is paid to health and safety. The school places high priority on staying healthy and has, for example; recently involved pupils in decisions to introduce the healthy options drink machines. There are high quality child protection arrangements. There are very effective links with a very wide range of external agencies involved with pupil welfare.

Grade: 2

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher, who was appointed in September following a period of changes in the leadership, sets a clear direction for the school with a well-judged focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards. He has raised expectations and

secured the loyalty of the staff. Unforeseen absences and the secondment of a deputy headteacher have been managed thoughtfully by distributing some tasks to others, but the headteacher has a heavy workload and is aware of the need to continue to strengthen senior management. Nevertheless, he has continued to drive improvements. There is an accurate view of the current position of the school on which future development plans, including those related to its Technology College and Beacon status, are based. The headteacher is aware that some of these plans are not focused sharply enough. Governors have managed considerable financial difficulties well, enabling the school to continue to bring about improvements within significant budgetary constraints.

Changes to arrangements are enabling middle managers to develop a more consistent approach and some are leading improvements. There are good plans to focus systems for evaluating the quality of classroom practice more sharply on learning. The school values all the members of its community highly and serves them well. It has implemented its policy on race equality.

The accommodation is uneven in quality. Some areas are welcoming, but others are very shabby and part of the site is derelict. Despite some improvement, the library provision remains in need of development. Outdoor facilities for physical education are limited. The school is appropriately staffed with enough resources to support the curriculum. There is an extensive range of very good links with other agencies, including initial teacher training institutions. As a Beacon School and Technology College, the school has fostered good links with other schools and partners. It provides good value for money.

Grade: 2

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