



# St John Wall Catholic School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 103534  
**LEA** Birmingham  
**Inspection number** 276946  
**Inspection dates** 1 December 2005 to 2 December 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Faysal Mikdadi RISP

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Oxhill Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Handsworth
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Birmingham, West Midlands B21 8HH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 5541825
<b>Number on roll</b>	617	<b>Fax number</b>	0121 5070993
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Rose Mason
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Hussey

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors

## **Description of the school**

Saint John Wall Catholic School is a small, oversubscribed, comprehensive school in the Handsworth area of Birmingham. Its students come from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. One third of the students are Catholic. The local area has had many racial and social tensions in recent times.

After a turbulent time, the school has had a new leadership team since September 2004. An ethnically diverse staff includes many who have had long service in the school and who also work and live in the local community.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

St John Wall is a satisfactory school. Leadership by key staff and the governing body is also satisfactory. Monitoring and evaluation have improved, particularly in this last year, since the appointment of the new headteacher, when data on the students' prior attainment have been used effectively to set challenging targets. This work has already had an impact on improving the end of Year 9 test results in 2005, especially in mathematics and science.

On entry, students have low literacy skills, and a strong focus on writing in the past meant that reading was neglected. Recently, therefore, strategies were put in place to improve reading skills especially for boys. Teaching is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress, but do less well in Years 7 to 9 than they do in Years 10 and 11 because teachers give older students more opportunities to work independently than they do the younger ones. The school is now helping younger students do better through better planning of lessons, setting clear targets for each student and helping them achieve them. GCSE results improved in 2005 and current standards indicate that the targets set will help students achieve their potential. The school has a good capacity to improve.

Social disharmony which exists in the local community is not reflected in this calm, inclusive, ethnically diverse and secure school. Students feel safe and happy. Their behaviour is good. The school has been particularly successful in creating a warm ethos within which students are well looked after and cared for and relate well to each other and staff. This has led to improvements in opportunities for personal development through targets set, regular reviews, mentoring strategies, links with parents and the local community and, most significantly, the school's strong Catholic ethos. However, the personal, social and health education programme has not been well co-ordinated until recently. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- take action to improve students' literacy skills in Years 7 to 9 so that standards continue to rise
- ensure that teachers allow students more independence as well as more opportunities to contribute to their own learning
- improve the co-ordination of the personal, social and health education programme.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

On entry to the school, students' attainment is average, although very few come in with the higher levels in national tests. Many boys have weak literacy skills. Over the last three years, test results at the end of Year 9 have been below the national average. The mathematics results have improved with many students gaining the higher levels in 2005. The science results had dipped in 2004 but went up significantly in 2005. The picture in English has fluctuated a lot with the results down in 2005 after a peak in

2004. The school's comprehensive analysis of the reasons for the decline in English found out that a focus on writing has been carried out at the expense of teaching reading skills. As a result, it put in place strategies for improving poor reading skills especially by the boys. Current standards indicate improvements in reading are well on the way to reaching the targets set for Year 9 in 2006. The school had also identified that boys in general and black boys in particular underachieve and it set up strategies to help them. Consequently, boys' performance improved in 2005 in the end of Year 9 tests as well as at GCSE. Progress is satisfactory. Students do better in Years 10 and 11 because of a stronger focus on enhancing literacy skills, setting targets and telling the students what they need to do to reach them. Recent developments have extended this approach with students in Years 7 to 9.

As a result, standards in Years 10 and 11 are higher than in the lower school with the students making better progress than they had in Years 7 to 9. Consequently, GCSE results have improved steadily over the last three years. Current targets aim to continue these improvements especially in English where boys have performed less well than girls. Standards continue to improve in Years 10 and 11 because the school is making much better use of data. Prior attainment is used to set individual targets and then progress is reviewed. Teachers' now effectively use data to plan students' learning.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's religious ethos is used well to promote spirituality and moral responsibility, for instance through assemblies about the way we depend on each other. There are clear rules for students to follow. These are enforced strictly but fairly. Students behave well around the school, and misbehaviour in lessons is dealt with appropriately. Students report that when bullying occurs it is dealt with satisfactorily. The issue is tackled openly, through posters around the school and a recent anti-bullying week. There has been a recent but significant improvement in attendance, which is now good. The school met its ambitious target of 94% attendance in the current term. The work of learning mentors makes an important contribution to improvements in behaviour and attendance.

The way that the school makes good use of the rich mix of cultures and faiths represented in the school is a strength. All are treated with equal value and respect. For instance, the chapel is used by students of all faiths for worship and contemplation. Students report no disharmony between the ethnic groups in the school, although recently this has been a feature in the local community.

Students are encouraged to lead healthy lives through diet and exercise. However, those not choosing GCSE physical education are limited to only one hour a week of physical activity. Students make a strong contribution to the local community, for instance through the allotment project which provides fresh produce to deprived members of the community. Students are prepared adequately for adult independence and, for example, successful adults from a range of ethnic backgrounds support students in a variety of ways.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent and this allows the students to contribute in lessons, which they do in Years 10 and 11. However, they are not generally given many opportunities to work independently in Years 7 to 9. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and interesting tasks help many students learn well, especially in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, domination by teachers' presentations leaves little opportunity for students to contribute and learn effectively. The quality of assessment is satisfactory. Students' written work is marked regularly and students are encouraged to work hard, through effort grades, for example. However, the use of written guidance, self-assessment and peer assessment methods to help students improve the standard of their work, are generally not well established.

Students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and students with behavioural difficulties, are set work that is well matched to their needs. The teaching of these students is of a high standard, enabling them to make good progress in their general learning skills and in their subject knowledge and understanding. Teaching assistants are well deployed, providing good support.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. Current arrangements for teaching personal, social, health, citizenship and careers education are not adequate because they are not effectively co-ordinated, leading to inconsistent practice. In Years 10 and 11, students study a good range of compulsory and optional GCSE subjects. Provision for vocational subjects is developing and is satisfactory. Additional breadth in this area is provided through good links with colleges. Students are well prepared for leaving school through the work experience programme, the Connexions service and, in Year 10, citizenship education.

Improvements in the last year have meant that provision for the basic skills of literacy is now good. For numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), provision is satisfactory. Courses are well matched to the needs of students with learning difficulties, helping them to achieve well, in GCSE examinations, for example. Excellent planning supports students with behavioural difficulties, for example in the Student Support Unit and through participation in 'The Uplands Curriculum Allotment Project'. Recent curriculum support for students at risk of exclusion is encouraging these students to work hard.

Students enjoy a satisfactory range of extra curricular activities. The programme is not evaluated to gauge its effectiveness in promoting students' confidence and enjoyment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Staff know students well and provide good care, guidance and support. Arrangements to safeguard students are in place and the school continually seeks improvement, for instance by resurfacing the playground and supervising the boarding of buses. Child protection arrangements are satisfactory.

Parents and students agree that the school provides students with good support and that their views are listened to. For example, students have been instrumental in making changes to the school menu. Students are set targets for what they should learn next. They understand these targets, which are frequently reviewed with teachers and more formally with their form tutor. Students know what GCSE grades they should be aiming for, and of the qualifications they need to achieve their career aspirations.

Older students are given good guidance in choosing careers, or the next stage of their education. Younger students, however, are prepared less well for the choices that face them at the end of Year 9 when they making GCSE choices.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school's leadership and management are satisfactory. Because the leadership team is relatively new, the impact on standards of the work that it has done in the last year has not fully shown through. The new headteacher and his senior team recognised that there was much to do to tackle low standards, and recent plans have become firmly centred on raising achievement. Improving students' learning through more effective development of staff is, appropriately, a current priority. A strong Christian ethos lies at the heart of decision making, creating an inclusive approach to students and staff.

Senior leaders check on the school's work carefully. The use of this information is satisfactory but is not focused on improving learning precisely enough. Heads of department are taking an increasingly active role in evaluating departmental effectiveness, following the lead set by more senior staff.

Governance is satisfactory. The need to replace the unsafe playground surface led to a deficit budget this year. The governors have plans in place to eliminate the debt. Finances are otherwise stable.

Improvement since the last report has been good. Leaders and managers at all levels now demonstrate good capacity to improve further. Evaluation of the quality of teaching is accurate. There is much ongoing action to raise students' achievement.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

St John Wall Catholic School Oxhill Road Handsworth Birmingham B21 8HH

2 December 2005

Dear Students

I am writing to tell you about our visit to your school. I would like to start off by thanking you for welcoming us so warmly into your school. We enjoyed our visit. I particularly enjoyed talking with you during your breaks and listening to your wonderful recitation of the Hail Mary in French.

Your school does a good job of caring for you. It gives you a lot of chances to improve your personal development. There is a warm and safe environment for you to work in. The result has been an improvement in your test and examination results in 2005. Your progress in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and a little better in Years 10 and 11. We have suggested that the school needs to work more on helping you improve your standards of work in Years 7 to 9, especially in reading.

Teaching is satisfactory. Your caring teachers work hard to make sure that you improve your work. We have suggested that it would help you if you had more opportunities to work independently of your teacher so that you get used to relying on your own efforts. We have also suggested that your personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme should be better managed.

Once again, thank you very much for your kind and courteous reception of our team. We wish you the very best in the future.

Yours faithfully

Dr F H Mikdadi Lead inspector