



St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104833
LEA St. Helens
Inspection number 277228
Inspection dates 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005
Reporting inspector Ms Georgina White HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Boardmans Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Blackbrook
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		St Helens, Merseyside WA11 9BB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01744 678112
Number on roll	720	Fax number	01744 678113
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Ann Crooks
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Thomas Bennett

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	Inspection number 277228
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one HMI and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School is a smaller than average voluntary aided school serving a relatively disadvantaged catchment area towards the east of St Helens. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is above average and the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school is popular and oversubscribed. A significant number of non-Catholic learners attend. Small numbers of students are of minority ethnic heritage and almost all students' first language is English. The school has recently been awarded specialist status as a visual arts college, which is opening up greater links with neighbouring schools, the Catholic sixth form college and the local education and business partnership.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that St Augustine of Canterbury provides a satisfactory education for its students and has some good features. The school makes good arrangements for students' care, support and personal development. This work is effective and enables students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make satisfactory progress. The curriculum is good, and it also is carefully planned to meet students' needs. Students enjoy and take part enthusiastically in all that the school offers and their achievements and the standards that they reach are satisfactory. These stronger aspects of the school's work are underpinned by good partnerships with a wide range of partners. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good practise but more needs to be done to embed these quickly in all lessons. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The recently appointed headteacher, assisted by the senior staff and governors, are already taking the right steps to move the school forward. They recognise in their accurate evaluation that this is linked to inconsistencies in the teaching and senior staff know there is room for improvement in some subjects. The weaker results in recent test and general certificate of secondary education, GCSE examinations confirm this. However, this is not fully reflected in all of the schools' current plans. Information from tests and assessments are not used rigorously enough by all subject leaders to monitor students' progress. Developing strengths in leadership and improvements since the last inspection demonstrate the school has the capacity to improve further. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that every subject leader uses information from tests to thoroughly check students' progress.
- Improve teaching to involve pupils more actively in their learning and make lessons more interesting and challenging.
- Ensure coherence between subject and whole school planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall standards and the students' progress by the end of Key Stage 4 are satisfactory.

Students enter the school in Year 7 with broadly average standards, although the range

of ability is wide. By the end of Year 11 all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress given their starting points.

Standards in English by the end of Year 9 have risen considerably in 2005, yet results in

mathematics and science show little change to 2004. Standards in external

examinations at the end of Year 11 rose in 2004 and were above national averages. The latest examination results on the whole show a significant downturn in 2005 and the school has met few of its statutory targets. However, some subjects taken by older students go against this trend. Standards in the new applied GCSE in health and social care are high and results for some design and technology courses are improving. Students do very well in the subjects that they choose to take: higher standards in English Literature have been maintained in 2005 and performance in drama, art and geography continue to be strong in comparison to other subjects. Students performed less well in mathematics, science, English and in religious education. The school has identified that the progress of some students who arrive with high standards in science slows between Year 7 and Year 9. Actions to tackle this are showing encouraging signs of improvement. Students make better progress in English than they do in mathematics and the school are investigating how they can improve results in mathematics. By the end of Year 11 most students met their English targets in 2005. However, their progress in meeting targets in other subjects is not consistently identified in the annual data analyses conducted by subject departments.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students enjoy and many participate actively in all that the school offers. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and attendance is improving. Relationships between staff and students, and between groups of students, are very positive. Bullying and harassment are challenged and incidents are dealt with effectively. Younger children value the support of some older students who act as peer mentors.

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, and social development is good. In comparison, students' awareness of diversity and culture are at an early stage of development.

The school is proactive in addressing drug and alcohol issues and in encouraging students to adopt safe practices and healthy lifestyles. In discussions, students explained how this helps them to stop smoking and to counteract peer pressure. Healthy eating and exercise are strongly promoted and while this has heightened students' awareness a number have yet to apply them.

Students make a very positive contribution to the school and local community through a wide range of opportunities and responsibilities. They are being strongly encouraged to share in decision-making through the new school council. Charity work enables them to extend their influence internationally and is enthusiastically supported.

Students are well prepared for the world of work and the school has gained recognition for work related learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school, teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good practice. This variation in quality is reflected in the standards achieved by pupils in different subjects.

In the best lessons, the purpose of the learning is clearly stated at the beginning enabling students to understand precisely what is expected of them. A wide range of strategies and activities involve and excite students of all abilities and they find the work relevant. Consequently, they are able to sustain interest and produce work of high quality: for example, the well executed and professional quality of birthday cards in the vocational arts course. Satisfactory teaching and learning are characterised by effective planning so that course requirements are covered, but this is not always done in a challenging and stimulating manner.

Assessment is satisfactory. Students of all ages know what level they have achieved in each subject and what targets they are working towards. Although work is always checked for accuracy not all teachers make clear what students need to do to move on to the next stage. In the most effective practice, students are involved in well structured activities to assess their own and others work and clearly know what they have to do to get better. The school has rightly identified that in order to raise standards, there is a need to share the good practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a wide range of courses that are well matched to students' current needs, abilities and talents. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is enhanced by courses in drama and citizenship. Year 10 and 11 options have been re-modelled to more firmly reflect the schools status as an arts college. New courses have been introduced to provide a strong work related focus and match the needs of all students. Good partnerships with local colleges enable some lower attaining students to receive additional work related programmes. They have led to a greater take up of further education and training. An extensive range of extra curricular activities is provided: they are well attended and effectively supplement the arts and sports programmes. Students' health and safety education are well covered in subjects and in courses to promote their understanding of personal, social and health education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good care and support throughout the school. They feel well cared for and listened to. Formal support and intervention provided by learning mentors and classroom assistants is well targeted enabling students with learning difficulties and disabilities to participate and make progress in lessons. The sensitive way in which it is provided is highly valued by students. A high priority is placed upon students' involvement and that of their parents and carers when negotiating support programmes and specific targets to meet their individual needs.

Partnership work with primary schools promotes continuity of care and support. Well targeted events and activities such as 'keeping safe' are effective in building positive relationships and in enabling students to make a good start in Year 7.

Arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements. Advice and guidance is clear, enabling staff to respond in a consistent way to students. Effective links are maintained with a wide range of support services.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher is relatively new in post. His strong leadership is promoting a shared understanding and common purpose within the school to raise standards while continuing to ensure strengths in the personal development and care of students are maintained. Individual strengths within the senior leadership team complement each other well. The effectiveness of leadership at subject level varies from satisfactory to very good. Teaching is regularly monitored, although actions resulting from it have yet to make sufficient impact in raising achievement or in reducing the variation in the standard of teaching. The strengths in teaching and in subject leaders practice have yet to be shared throughout the school. A well structured system of subject self-evaluation has recently been introduced and is helping these leaders to identify strengths and weaknesses in their areas more purposefully. Information from testing is used well to report standards and to identify where there has been underachievement, although it is not used rigorously enough to analyse and monitor students' progress.

Senior managers are accurate in their self-evaluation, and they and governors know the schools' strengths and weaknesses and understand what they need to do to improve. However, this is not fully reflected in current plans and there is a lack of coherence between subject plans and the overall school improvement plan.

Parents are very supportive of the school and value its work. Governors are firmly involved in the life of their school and are developing their ability to challenge senior leaders. Governors and staff have worked hard, within financial constraints, to improve the physical environment of the school and resources, particularly in information and communications technology. Robust procedures ensure that the school is a safe environment. The progress made in tackling key issues from the last inspection, recent

improvements in the curriculum and the gaining of specialist school status show a good capacity for further improvement.

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	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

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ 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	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	2	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	3	NA

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	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

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

Thank you very much to all of you who spoke to us and answered our questions during our recent visit to your school. We appreciate the help you gave us and we were very impressed by your courtesy and good behaviour. Here is a brief summary of the findings from the inspection.

- The school provides you with a satisfactory education. We think the school makes good arrangements for your care, and supports and guides you well as you are growing up. We were pleased to hear that you are adopting safe practices and healthy lifestyles but some of you have yet to take up the healthy eating and exercise messages.
- There is a good range of subjects, courses and activities for you to study. They are well matched to your current needs, abilities and your talents and prepare you well for the world of work. Many of you take part actively in the wide range of opportunities in your school. You work well with teachers and help each other. You told us that this adds to your enjoyment of school.
- The new headteacher, assisted by the senior staff, have a clear idea about what the school does well and what needs to be improved. They are working with all staff and governors to make changes to tackle them.
- We can see that standards and progress overall are satisfactory but results in recent tests and examinations are not as strong as last year. Your headteacher and teachers think there is room for improvement in some subjects and we agree.
- Teaching is satisfactory and some lessons are good. In the good lessons teachers made the work exciting and challenging and involved you in assessment so that you knew exactly what you needed to do to improve.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Improve the quality of teaching to make all lessons more exciting and to involve you all more actively in learning.
- Make sure that every subject leader uses information from tests to thoroughly check the progress you make.
- To make sure that plans to improve the quality of subjects and those to improve the whole school are more joined up.