



# Thornleigh Salesian College

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 105264  
**LEA** Bolton  
**Inspection number** 277328  
**Inspection dates** 25 January 2006 to 26 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Michael Blaylock HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Sharples Park
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Astley Bridge
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Bolton, Lancashire BL1 6PQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 301351
<b>Number on roll</b>	1577	<b>Fax number</b>	01204 595351
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Fr A Bailey
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 March 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Fr M Coyle

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 25 January 2006 - 26 January 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 277328
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Thornleigh Salesian College is a large Roman Catholic comprehensive school, educating 1,577 boys and girls aged 11 to 19, including 338 in the sixth form. The sixth form is called the Bolton Catholic Sixth Form Centre and serves two other Catholic secondary schools as well as Thornleigh. The school's register of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities comprises 370 pupils. This represents a slightly above average proportion, although the proportion with statements of special educational need is slightly below average.

The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is well below average. A below average proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals. The school serves a broad social mix including both prosperous areas and some areas of social disadvantage. Overall, the level of deprivation is in line with the national average.

The school achieved specialist school status as a sports college in September 2003. It has attracted additional funding and support through its collaborative involvement with other schools. The school also has Investors in People.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The overall effectiveness of Thornleigh Salesian College in providing education and care for its pupils is judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in the school are inadequate for the 11 to 16 year old pupils, but in all other areas the school's work is judged to be at least satisfactory. The school has recognised that achievement and standards are unsatisfactory and has put systems in place to effect improvement. These include rigorous quality assurance, with increased monitoring and clear accountability. Although this is at an early stage, it is already beginning to have an impact on improving standards. Consequently, despite the inadequacies in the key area of achievement and standards, the overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory.

The personal development and well-being of pupils is satisfactory for 11 to 16 year old pupils and good in the sixth form. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all learners is good. However, the school is not always sufficiently responsive to concerns of both pupils and parents. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but does include good practice. In many lessons pupils are not actively engaged in their learning; poor behaviour disrupts learning in some lessons. While the curriculum offer in the sixth form is good, it is only satisfactory in the main school because of weaknesses in the provision for citizenship and for vocational courses for 14 to 16 year olds. The school has a strong commitment to the pastoral care of its pupils. Overall, the quality of the care, guidance and support for learners is satisfactory.

With four headteachers in five years the school has experienced considerable change over that time. A new leadership group is now in place. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school has the capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors agreed with the college that its sixth form is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress and attain standards which are close to the national average although standards in science need to improve.

The curriculum is good because it offers an extensive range of advanced (A) level courses and retake general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects together with vocational courses. This meets the needs of most students. There is some enrichment through religious education. On one afternoon each week, students have a non-academic programme, often of a sporting nature. Students generally complete their courses, although some in Year 12 are on courses which may prove too demanding for them. Most students continue into higher education.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students' personal development is good. The college regularly seeks students' views as to the quality of teaching. Students enjoy sixth form life. They welcome the Catholic ethos and the help and support provided

by their tutors. Some students feel that more could be done to offer careers guidance. Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement and standards.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning through increased interaction, differentiation and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enrich lessons, engage learners and improve behaviour.
- Firmly establish the new quality assurance and assessment and monitoring systems and practices.
- Become more responsive to parents' and pupils' views in developing the school in partnership with parents, pupils and the wider community.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Learners' achievements and standards are inadequate overall although satisfactory in the sixth form. Pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 is in line with national expectations, but the poor progress pupils make in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in Years 7, 8 and 9 means they do not attain the standards expected of them at the end of Year 9 or in GCSE and GNVQ examinations. The school is aware of the levels of underachievement. Early indications from new tracking systems suggest that pupils are performing at higher levels than in previous years and that the school is on target to improve results.

From slightly above average levels of attainment on entry pupils achieve results at the end of Year 9 which are in line with the national average. This represents poor progress and significant underachievement when compared with pupils in other schools. The 2004 English results indicated reasonable progress but this was not sustained in 2005. Science results showed improved progress in 2005, although this was still below the expected level. The progress pupils make in mathematics has been consistently poor.

At Key Stage 4 the proportion achieving five or more GCSE grades of A\* to C fell over the period 2003-05. The proportion of pupils achieving the very best grades in the 2005 results was low in many subjects although it was significantly higher than expected in history. Results across subjects vary considerably. Some improvement can be seen in ICT results.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and do attain the expected standards. Other pupils perform well in some areas but overall do not attain as well as expected.

The school operates an open access policy to its sixth form. When students enter the college their average GCSE grades are close to, but a little below, national averages. In both 2004 and 2005, A-level examination results were also close to the national average but the standard achieved in science subjects is not high enough.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory in the school and good in the sixth form. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. For example, in the Year 8 and 9 assembly in the Chapel pupils reflected on the lives of famous people who had 'made a difference'. The money raised by the school for a large number of charities is particularly impressive.

Whilst the behaviour of many pupils is good, there is a small but significant number of pupils who find it difficult to conform to the school's expectations of good behaviour. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy through diet and regular exercise. They are developing the personal qualities that will enable them to be good citizens of the future by contributing effectively to the community. Opportunities to contribute through the school council are limited however. Most pupils confirm that they enjoy their learning and are confident that teachers will help them if they have a problem.

Students in the sixth form have opportunities to contribute to the school community through peer support and paired reading. Sensitive support is given to younger pupils in the Don Bosco garden. Members of the sixth form committee are proud of their contribution to the social life of the sixth form and their fundraising for charity.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers show good subject knowledge but in many cases do not inspire or provide sufficient challenge and interaction to fully engage pupils in learning. In those lessons that are good, teachers have clear learning objectives, high expectations and use teaching strategies tailored to learners' needs so that they make good progress. The majority of pupils take a pride in their work and enjoy making a contribution to lessons. However, disruptive behaviour by a small minority of pupils does inhibit progress in some classes.

Teachers know their pupils well and generally have a fair idea of the standard of their work. However, they do not always make good use of the assessment data that is available to inform planning. In addition, the marking of work is inconsistent and frequently fails to give pupils clear guidance on what they have achieved and what they should do to improve. Pupils do not routinely assess their own progress. The school has made recent improvements to the monitoring of pupils' academic progress. Teachers have begun to use assessment data that enables them to track pupils' academic progress more effectively and to set targets that show pupils how to improve their levels of performance.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well identified and receive good support in developing literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching assistants are well informed and contribute to the preparation of lessons as well as supporting pupils in the classroom.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum overall and the sixth form curriculum is good. As befits a Catholic school with sports college status, physical education and religious education occupy more time on the curriculum than in most schools and make a valuable contribution to pupils' health and spiritual development.

Opportunities to study Latin from Year 8 and separate sciences in Years 10 and 11 successfully meet the needs and aspirations of able pupils. However, a limited range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and weaknesses in the personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE) programme hinder the personal development of some pupils. The school is aware of these issues and has plans in hand to address them. In the sixth form, the range of

examination courses caters for the needs of the majority of students. A wide range of extra-curricular activities enhance pupils' enjoyment of school life.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support. There are established arrangements for child protection. Pupils feel safe and are aware of anti-bullying measures, although a small number of bullying incidents have occurred, some of which have taken a while to resolve. The needs of vulnerable pupils are well met through, for example, access to the safe haven of the Don Bosco garden that is run by the school chaplain. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with good support and care by committed teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils who are at risk of underachieving are now being identified and mentoring support is provided.

The school gives pupils good careers advice and guidance that prepare them well for education, training and employment opportunities at the end of Year 11, although some pupils say they would like better guidance for their future.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory and demonstrate the capacity for further improvement. The current headteacher is the fourth headteacher in five years in the school. During this period the school has suffered from a lack of leadership and falling standards.

The headteacher is ably supported by the newly appointed deputy headteacher. They are acutely aware of the need to provide leadership and raise standards.

There have been significant developments in the leadership team. This now consists of the headteacher, one deputy head and seven assistant headteachers and the school business manager, each with clearly identified areas of responsibility. The team includes both experienced Thornleigh school staff and recent external appointments; this is already proving useful in moving the school forward. Rigorous quality assurance and assessment and monitoring systems and practices have recently been introduced. Completing the school's self-evaluation form has been a productive exercise for the leadership group. The evaluation is broadly accurate and identifies the areas for development.

Middle managers have an increased awareness of their roles and responsibilities, although the school has identified and is addressing some inconsistencies. There is a commitment to the training and development of middle managers. Both subject leaders and those with pastoral responsibilities have an increasing role in monitoring both colleagues and pupils.

Opportunities for the continuing professional development of staff are well structured, involve all staff and contribute to school improvement. The long-term absence of some staff has disrupted teaching, leadership and provision. For example, the school council and the school's inclusion unit were unable to function. Disruption is less in the current year than previously, but there is need for the school to consider how it will cope should such problems arise in the future.

Governors are supportive of the school, in particular working to improve the buildings and making sure that money is well spent. They are aware of developments within the school and take care to ensure that the spiritual ethos of the school remains strong. However, they could play a stronger role in challenging the school to raise standards.

The local authority has supported the leadership team well and collaborative working in partnerships has been beneficial. The school's financial position is healthy. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The accommodation is spacious and well maintained. Resources are adequate with good recent developments in providing ICT facilities to aid teaching.



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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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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

<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**

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome recently. We met many of you in lessons, in discussion groups, and during your break times and we found you helpful, polite and friendly. This letter is to let you know about the judgements we made during our visit.

When we began the inspection, we had some worries about the standards you reach in your work. Recent exam results for GCSE and Key Stage 3 are low and we think you are capable of doing better. During our visit, we saw that your teachers know this and have been working hard to help you do better. Since last September, many new systems have been put in place. Some check how well the teaching helps you learn. Others help teachers to check your results more closely so they can give extra help to those that need it. Because these systems are starting to make a difference, we have judged that your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education and care.

We also observed that most of you behave well. You say that you feel safe at school and enjoy the time you spend there, including the wide range of clubs and the very good sporting facilities. Many of you told us that teachers help you when you have a problem. However, a small number of individuals feel they are not listened to. The behaviour of some pupils has a disruptive effect in some lessons.

We believe that Thornleigh could improve further. Most of you still need to reach higher standards in your work. We have suggested that the school can help you by:

- improving lessons so that everyone is challenged by working at the right level
- discussing your progress with you regularly to ensure you are on target
- making sure all lessons are interesting, for example by using ICT.

It is most important that this involves everyone working together as a team - pupils, parents, teachers and governors - so that the school continues to improve and helps you achieve your best.

Thank you for all your help with this inspection.