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Inspection Report

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 105266
LEA Bolton
Inspection number 277329
Inspection dates 21 September 2005 to 22 September 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Brian Sharples HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Lucas Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Farnworth
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Bolton, Lancashire BL4 9RU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01204 333000
Number on roll	1073	Fax number	01204 333201
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr A Bromley
Date of previous inspection	11 October 1999	Headteacher	Mr C Atkinson

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 21 September 2005 - 22 September 2005	Inspection number 277329
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St James's Church of England School and Sports College is a larger than average voluntary aided school serving a wide catchment area within Bolton. The area is varied in character drawing from many wards with higher than average levels of social and economic deprivation. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is low and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above the national average. The number of minority ethnic pupils is slightly above average at around 20 per cent. The school has recently been awarded specialist sports college status, which is opening greater links with neighbouring schools and the wider local community.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides good value for money. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, which in turn ensures that pupils make good progress and achieve above average standards by the time they leave school. The school has identified concerns over progress and higher attainment at Key Stage 3 and is implementing strategies to address them. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and in Key Stage 4 is varied to meet the different needs of pupils. The growing provision of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 is providing a good range of pathways which are helping to prepare pupils well for further education, training or employment.

The school has recently received specialist sports college status and, while it is too soon to measure its impact on standards, the vision and potential for improvement are clearly evident. The recent rebuild of sports facilities and greatly improved outdoor areas are already raising interest and aspirations among staff and pupils. The care, guidance, support and personal development of pupils are outstanding overall. The great majority of parents acknowledge this through the parent questionnaires. However, the school is not complacent and knows that it needs to be vigilant in its response to the small number of bullying or bad behaviour incidents. Overall, the pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are good.

The leadership and management provided by the headteacher, governors and the senior team are good. There are some effective systems for carrying out ongoing self-evaluation of the school and, as a result, it knows its strengths and weaknesses well. The inspection team agree with all of the school's judgements provided for the inspection. There is an ethos of close cooperation and a sharing of common goals between all parties including staff, pupils and parents. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. The capacity for this school to become outstanding under the current leadership team is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in under-attaining subjects at Key Stage 4.
- Further improve progress and standards in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3.
- Further develop the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning in all subjects.
- Address the issues surrounding lunchtime arrangements and space in the dining room.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, standards and the pupils' progress by the end of Key Stage 4 are good.

Up to 2004, the combined results in Key Stage 3 core subjects are just above average. Too few pupils reached the higher levels in English and mathematics by the end of Year 9, causing progress in these subjects to be significantly below the national average at Key Stage 3. However, this year's results indicate that the school has made some improvements in both these subjects. Standards in science at Key Stage 3 are significantly better than those nationally.

Standards at Key Stage 4 are good and have been rising up to 2004. Although they have fallen slightly this year, standards continue to be well above average. Pupils do very well in art, English, geography, media studies and the separate sciences. They perform less well in mathematics. In French and Spanish, results are below national averages.

Pupils enter school in Year 7 having achieved slightly higher than average standards at the end of Key Stage 2. The standards reached by the end of Key Stage 4 show that all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make at least satisfactory and often good progress by the end of Year 11. School managers carefully monitor the pupils' progress. They set ambitious targets, which help both teachers and pupils to aim high.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The provision for pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. The Christian ethos of the school and its inclusive faiths policy creates a supportive and caring learning environment for pupils. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is of a high standard, with good contributions from a number of subject areas including, religious education, geography and art. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance levels are high in all years and pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The majority of pupils are keen to learn, although a small minority lack attention in some subjects. Senior managers are aware that there are a small number of concerns from both parents and pupils in relation to bullying. As a result, they are continually trying new strategies to address the issue and are closely monitoring the situation. Many pupils speak positively about recent initiatives and say they feel safe in school and free from racial harassment.

The school promotes healthy living and a nutrition group has recently been established to further develop healthy eating. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to make an active contribution to life in the school and the local community. Many pupils take advantage of this. The school council represents pupils' opinions well and many suggestions are acted upon by school managers. The skills and understanding pupils need for employment are very well developed during their time in school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The overall quality of lessons visited was never less than satisfactory and the vast majority were good or outstanding. The enthusiasm and commitment of both pupils and teachers are evident. Learners make good progress because teaching matches their needs, motivates them and prepares them to work independently. Teachers' high expectations and subject knowledge help pupils to focus on achieving a good standard of work. Pupils are clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They are able to judge the quality of their own work and the work of classmates. Work is appropriate for all pupils' needs and those with additional needs are very well supported and guided. Very good relationships and good behaviour reflect the school's ethos and build pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are being developed and reinforced through many subjects across the curriculum. However, ICT is not used consistently in all subjects. In a small proportion of lessons where there was less independent learning and a slower pace, the learning was only satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provided is good and meets the varying needs of pupils. Good curriculum planning ensures that the needs of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are well met. The Work Related Learning Programme provides an alternative curriculum particularly for disaffected pupils. Extra curricular activities are varied and well supported, and the school is planning to enhance the activities further through the recent acquisition of specialist sports college status. There are good, extensive partnerships with other educational providers and organisations in the wider community. The onsite Connexions service is successful in providing careers information for pupils. The personal, social, health and citizenship programmes contribute well to the pupils' understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care provided for pupils is outstanding. Health and safety procedures are firmly established and understood by staff. Risk assessments are robust both in school and off-site. Pupils confirm that they have a trusted adult to turn to if they feel troubled. Every pupil is known well and treated with the utmost dignity by all adults. The procedures for child protection and for pupils in public care are very good. The provision for pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is good and teachers are aware of their needs. The new learning difficulties or disabilities coordinator is reviewing the arrangements to ensure that pupils' individual education plans are up to date, relevant and 'parent-friendly'. Pupils who have sought refuge in

this country are warmly welcomed into the Christian 'family' of St James's School. Pupils are involved in setting their own targets which helps them understand what they have to do to improve, and older pupils receive good guidance when choosing options and making career choices.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher, governors and senior leadership team have a clear vision for the continued development of the school. This is driven by a strong desire to see a rise in standards, while at the same time ensuring that the needs of each individual pupil are met. There is a good school development plan in place which clearly identifies the priorities for improvement and criteria to measure when these are achieved. The plan is produced as a result of good teamwork between the senior leadership team, staff and governors. This in turn enables everyone to have a shared understanding and ownership of the school's vision and priorities.

The school is developing some good systems for monitoring and evaluating its own progress, which involves the senior leadership team, subject leaders and governors. An effective performance management system is in place for all teachers. The school is now introducing a similar system for all support staff.

Subject leaders are developing as an important management force in the school and are given responsibility for ensuring that standards are good in their curriculum areas. The senior leadership team and governors have recently supported several subject leaders through a national training programme. Subject leaders are generally effective in their role.

The school budget is well managed by the governors and headteacher.

Funding has been used efficiently to reduce the pupil to teacher ratio. The newly awarded sports college status has enabled the senior leadership team to increase the number of teachers in physical education. There has also been some major spending to improve several teaching areas around the school, which has resulted in improved teaching and learning in these areas. A significant number of parents expressed concern over the cramped dining room and lunchtime arrangements for pupils. These are shared by the inspection team. The leadership has acknowledged the issue and is looking for an appropriate solution.

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	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	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	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?	1	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?	2	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	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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 for welcoming us to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you about your work and to listen to your views about the school. We have decided that St James's is a good school and recognise that you, along with the teachers, parents and other helpers, all help to make it the way it is.

What we liked most about your school

- Your good behaviour and attitudes towards school.
- The interest you show and good progress you make in lessons.
- The good leadership of the headteacher and his team.
- Most of the teaching is good and helps you to do your best.
- The outstanding care, guidance and support available for you.
- The range of courses that you can study, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The wide range of activities at lunchtime and after school.
- The way you care about other people in school, locally and nationally. We are impressed by how much money you raise for charities and good causes.
- The interest your parents show in the school and that most of them rightly believe it is a good school.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Improve the examination results in Year 11 in subjects which could do better.
- Improve the results in English and mathematics at the end of Year 9.
- Teachers should use ICT in all subjects to improve teaching and learning.
- Make sure that the arrangements at lunchtimes and the space in the dining room are improved.

The inspection team hope you are pleased with the things we have said about your school and are proud of what you, your staff, governors and parents have achieved.