



St Paul's Catholic High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105579
LEA Manchester
Inspection number 277378
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Michael Blaylock HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Firbank Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Newall Green
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Manchester, Lancashire M23 2YS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 437 5841
Number on roll	789	Fax number	0161 498 2030
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Tommy Judge
Date of previous inspection	10 September 2001	Headteacher	Mr Wiktor Daron

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	Inspection number 277378
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Paul's Catholic High School is a Voluntary Aided Catholic Secondary school with 789 pupils on roll. The school provides education and care for children from Catholic families in Wythenshawe, a socially disadvantaged area in south Manchester. There is a diversity of minority ethnic groups in the school, although the overall proportion is below the national average and pupils are predominantly white British. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average. Just over a quarter of the pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities with twenty five pupils having statements of special educational needs. There are 43 pupils for whom English as an additional language.

In the past three years the number on roll has gone down from over a thousand in 2002. In that time the proportions of pupils qualifying for free school meals, pupils with learning difficulties or with English as an additional language have all increased. The school was identified as having serious weakness in its previous inspection in December 2003. The current headteacher and the two deputy heads started in the school in September 2003.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In view of the school's capacity for further improvement, in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve.

St Paul's Catholic High School is an improving school that has made progress in many areas since its previous inspection. Inspectors judged the school's performance to be satisfactory or better in all areas apart from one. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall with some good elements. The care, guidance and support that pupils receive are good. The quality of teaching and learning is improving; it was judged satisfactory and included very good and even exemplary practice. The curriculum has developed to include a strong vocational element in Years 10 and 11 and adequately meets the needs of learners.

Achievement and standards is the area in which the school's performance is unsatisfactory. This judgement is based on the progress that pupils make from their recognised low levels of attainment on entry. There is improvement, particularly in the 2005 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results. However, this is from a very low previous position and does not yet represent adequate performance. Although the inspection team recognised a number of strengths in the school, weaknesses in this one crucial area means that the overall effectiveness of the school is unsatisfactory. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement and standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards through high expectations informed by comparison with national data.
- Ensure that pastoral support places due emphasis on monitoring, supporting and challenging pupils in their learning.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning with increased challenge and pace in lessons to stimulate and engage the interests of all learners enabling pupils to develop higher level skills.
- Embed policies to maintain and further improve attendance, punctuality and behaviour.
- Review the school-based curriculum provision for pupils on work placements and improve the provision for pupils with English as an additional language.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement and standards are unsatisfactory. Pupils do not make the progress they are capable of and standards are low at the end of both key stages.

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average, particularly in writing. In 2004 standards at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below what could be expected, indicating that pupils made insufficient progress. There was similar underachievement across all three core subjects in 2005. The 2004 results represented an improvement on previous very low levels and the overall trend for the past three years in English and mathematics is upwards, but standards at Key Stage 3 remain below expectation.

At the end of Key Stage 4 a low percentage of pupils get five or more higher GCSE grades. The 2004 GCSE results were exceptionally low. The 26 pupils who were at above average levels before they came to the school and the eight pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities did achieve as well as they should have done. However, progress over Years 10 and 11 was significantly below that of pupils in similar schools. GCSE results have improved in 2005 with a marked increase in the proportion gaining at least one GCSE grade. However further improvement is needed before the achievement and standards can be considered satisfactory, particularly for the middle to low attaining pupils. Over the full five years in the school most pupils fail to make the progress they should.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of pupils are satisfactory. Posters and icons remind pupils of the school's Catholic nature, and support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils show concern for their fellow human beings through charitable giving and prayer. This same concern does not extend to all relationships and both parents and pupils expressed anxiety about bullying, some of it racist. However, most pupils feel safe in the school.

The vast majority of pupils behave well, although there is poor behaviour from a small number of pupils. In lessons this can impede their own learning and that of their classmates if this challenging behaviour is not well managed. Some parents made their concerns about behaviour known to inspectors. The satisfactory behaviour observed in school also extended to that of a group of twelve Year 11 pupils with challenging behaviour who were targeted for an off-site enrichment activity throughout the period of the inspection.

Most pupils enjoy school, though they did tell inspectors they wished lessons could be more fun. The school council is developing well as a vehicle for pupils to express their views but they are not fully aware of its potency to effect real change.

The many reminders and checks have made some improvement on attendance although it remains stubbornly low. Not enough parents support the school in ensuring their children get to school regularly and on time. Improvements in punctuality can be seen in the school's records but too many pupils are still late for the start of school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Inspectors observed a small number of unsatisfactory lessons but also many that were good and some with very good and outstanding practice. The monitoring of teaching and learning is well developed and joint observations by inspectors with senior teachers confirmed the accuracy of the school's judgements. A strength of the school's provision is that the supply teachers who work in the school are generally known to pupils and staff and are well supported by their colleagues.

Most teachers possess good classroom management skills and are able to hold the attention of pupils. In these lessons the pace of the lessons is brisk, the nature of the work is varied and pupils are given the opportunity to be active participants in their own learning; for example, by taking part in discussions. Many teachers display a good knowledge of their subject and the courses they are teaching, they explain clearly to pupils the standards that are expected of them and show them how to attain these standards. In the majority of lessons, pupils behave well and have satisfactory attitudes towards learning.

In the best lessons observed, teachers have high expectations of themselves and their pupils. They plan their lessons well (many using three part lessons), provide good quality feedback and ensure pupils know what they need to do if they are to improve. Where lessons were less effective or inadequate the work was not well matched to the needs of pupils. This resulted in pupils not knowing how to tackle a given task, and giving up. In a number of lessons because the work was not sufficiently varied or challenging, pupils were not excited by or engaged in what they were doing. Consequently they did not achieve as well as they could nor develop higher skills needed to obtain top grades. In one PE lesson seen, however, progress was unsatisfactory because half of the pupils had reasons for not participating.

Assessment is satisfactory. A whole school approach to target-setting is in its early stages of implementation. The first assessment of the year is due at the end of term so it is not yet possible to assess its effectiveness in keeping pupils on target, or identifying where targets have been too modest. The quality of marking is variable; at its best it tells pupils what and why they have done well, but too often is restricted to ticks and occasional comments which are not followed up.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory in meeting the needs and interests of most learners. There have been recent improvements in provision. A good start has been made by providing workplace learning and offering a wider range of relevant courses in Years 10 and 11. All pupils develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively in workplace contexts through the business and communications

course, and an increasing number of pupils study vocational subjects at GCSE, although enterprise is undeveloped. Pupils at risk of exclusion can now continue their learning in practical, off-site settings. However, there is a problem of continuity for pupils involved in work-placements because they are expected to follow their original timetable for the time when they are in school. Literacy levels are low across the school, and there is no effective strategy to correct this. There is a good range of extra curricular activities, including an annual ski-trip, and numerous opportunities for pupils to support diverse needy causes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Procedures for child protection are robust, kept under review and understood by staff. Teachers and support staff know pupils well and work with a high level of commitment to promote their well-being. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. However, what is on offer to pupils in the canteen is variable. Healthy foods were seen to be available at lunchtimes but not at breaks. Pupils are able to have access to water dispensers in the school, but these are situated in offices or classrooms. A number of pupils buy bottled water in the school canteen and this is expensive. Arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress are satisfactory. Pupils also receive satisfactory guidance on choosing options and deciding what to do on leaving the school.

Learners at risk of exclusion are identified early and there are very good arrangements in place to support them. The school works especially well with a range of agencies to review the needs of identified pupils, to understand their circumstances, and to take appropriate action to help them. The number of pupils speaking English as an additional language in the school has steadily increased. However, there is insufficient expertise available in the school to provide them with adequate support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's leadership and management are satisfactory overall with some good elements. The headteacher is strongly committed to the care of pupils in the school and to raising their standards of attainment. He is concerned to work with all staff to move the school forward but is also prepared to address disciplinary and competency issues where necessary. The development of a large senior management team has been a deliberate strategy to generate collective ownership and responsibility. The delegating of responsibilities and the empowering of staff to lead within their areas represents a deliberate change of ethos towards a more open and less autocratic leadership style. Some middle managers, however, do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

The school is fully staffed although there has been a high turnover and recruitment and retention is an issue. In the past two years there have been isolated incidents of traumatic personal circumstances for staff. These have been sensitively dealt with but

have had an inevitable impact on colleagues and some disruption to the school. Long term staff absences have been adequately covered by supply teachers. There are satisfactory arrangements for the continuing professional development of staff. This addresses whole school issues, individual and subject needs. Performance management is securely in place. The transparent management of the move to Teaching and Learning Responsibilities has been handled very well with timely and clear communication.

Accommodation has been improved significantly over the last two years. Carpeting and displays have enhanced the environment of the school and fencing has improved security and the supervision of pupils. The strategic relocation of subjects and offices for staff has had a beneficial impact on behaviour. However in physical education (PE) inadequate accommodation has a negative impact on pupils' attitudes. The school has been identified as one of the first in Manchester to benefit from a 'Building Schools for the Future' funded major rebuild and refurbishment, with work scheduled to commence in August 2006.

The majority of parents are supportive of the school and recognise the improvements that have been made. They are appreciative of the recognition and the rewarding of pupils' achievements. There is a constructive dialogue between the school and the local authority through the link advisors. Governors discharge their responsibilities well although the governing body is not complete. They have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and set priorities for improvement, providing senior managers with a good balance of challenge and support.

The school is well funded and deploys resources imaginatively to provide additional and effective personal support for pupils. Value for money is satisfactory overall, although the school could be more evaluative of its use of funds.

The school's self evaluation is satisfactory. Completing the self evaluation form involved the senior management team and was a useful development activity. Inspectors' judgements were less generous than the school's apart from the sections on teaching and learning and care, guidance and support where there was confirmation of the school's own grades. Self evaluation is less secure in some areas, for example where subject leaders compare achievements within school without wider reference to national averages.

There has been steady improvement on all of the key issues arising from the previous inspection. Given the challenging context for the school, the changing nature of its community, significant changes in staffing, and some long-term staff absence this represents no mean achievement and indicates that the school has the capacity for further improvement.

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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?	4	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?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	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?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	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?	3	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 bodies discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are	Yes	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to let you know what we found when we inspected your school.

We found that Saint Paul's is a school that has made many recent improvements. Most of the school's work is at least satisfactory now. Your headteacher, other teachers and staff care for you and they support you well. Lessons are OK, some were fun. This made them more interesting and helped you enjoy learning. Your school is a lot more attractive now with carpets and displays. Textbooks and other resources, such as computers, are good but PE facilities still need improving. The major plans to rebuild the school promise an exciting future.

The standards you achieve are not yet good enough and need to improve. Exam results are below what you should be getting. Pupils who are higher ability and also those who find learning difficult do progress satisfactorily. However most of you do not make the progress that you could. You need to work hard with your teachers to do the best you can. Continuing to improve attendance and behaviour will help, as will getting to school on time.

We have made some suggestions to help the school improve. These include raising standards and making lessons more challenging and interesting. This should stretch you more and help you make better progress. You can help make your school better through working with your teachers and also through the School Council. Your parents also could be more involved; there are vacancies for governors at the moment.

Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and other interests and concerns.