



Notre Dame Catholic High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107159
LEA Sheffield
Inspection number 277720
Inspection dates 20 September 2005 to 21 September 2005
Reporting inspector Ms Jan Bennett HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Fulwood Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Sheffield
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		South Yorkshire S10 3BT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 230 2536
Number on roll	1324	Fax number	0114 230 8833
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father Cullen
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr J Conway

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 20 September 2005 - 21 September 2005	Inspection number 277720
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Notre Dame High School in Sheffield is a Roman Catholic mixed comprehensive school, and is a specialist technology college. There are over 1,300 pupils on roll including a sixth form of around 270 students. The school draws pupils from a wide range of social backgrounds from across the city. Most pupils enter the school having achieved slightly better than average results in their primary schools. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around average and 92% of pupils are white British.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the senior management team that Notre Dame is an outstanding school. Pupils make excellent progress and pass rates in public examinations are very high and improving. The teaching is highly effective. The Catholic ethos permeates all areas of school life. Pupils' personal development, and the care and support provided, are outstanding. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good and they feel very safe, secure and happy. The timetable is well balanced and there is a good mix of subjects with a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are highly valued by the pupils. Excellent links exist with a wide range of external organisations to support the welfare and education of pupils. Pupils are very proud of the school and it is held in high regard by parents.

The leadership of the school is outstanding. It is managed very efficiently and provides excellent value for money. The school is extremely well placed to improve its own performance and has continued to do so since the last inspection. Weaknesses noted in the previous report have been tackled successfully. Managers, governors and teachers continually strive to improve performance. The school's own systems for checking how well it is doing are outstanding and the self-evaluation report is accurate and detailed. Excellent use is made of statistical data to monitor and improve the performance of pupils and teachers. A number of managers and teachers are working with other schools to share the good practice that has been developed at Notre Dame.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is highly effective and students speak positively of the support and guidance they receive. Sixth form students mentor younger pupils and take a major role in contributing to liturgical services for all year groups. Standards at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) are well above average and have risen consistently over the last five years. Teaching is outstanding in many lessons and staff have very good knowledge of their subjects. Leadership and management are excellent and teachers are fully committed to the continuing development of sixth form provision. Value for money is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of lesson planning through the continued sharing of good practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards and achievement are outstanding and pupils make extremely good progress. Pass rates have been high for many years and continue to improve.

At Key Stage 3, results are above the national average in English, mathematics and science. The progress that pupils make in their learning places the school in the top 10% nationally. No group of students is underperforming and many are making better progress than might be expected given their attainment when they start at the school. At Key Stage 4, 73.3% of pupils achieved at least five general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) passes at grades A* to C, in 2004, and this percentage has risen again in 2005. Most GCSE subjects have pass rates that are much higher than the national average and many have a significantly high proportion of passes at grades A* and A. In 2004, the GCSE pass rates in religious education and physical education were low, but they have improved considerably in 2005.

In the sixth form, achievement and standards are very good and improving each year. GCE A-level and AS-level pass rates are above national averages and the proportion of good grades is high. Value added measures show that students' achievement is much higher than their performance at GCSE would suggest. Pass rates on advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) courses are high and improving.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' personal development is outstanding. It is well supported by the strong Catholic ethos and the core values of the mission statement that underpin all the school's work. Staff work most effectively to meet the specific needs of all pupils and enjoy warm relationships with them, based upon dignity and respect.

The pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the very high attendance rate of 95.8%. Their behaviour is exemplary; they share the high expectations of their teachers and generally act with maturity and concern for each other. The pupils feel safe and are confident that teachers will help to resolve problems such as bullying if they arise. They enjoy taking an active part in lessons and respond positively to their teachers, following instructions conscientiously. The pupils have an excellent opportunity to influence decisions through the school council, for example in developing more healthy eating styles, and they are represented by senior pupils on the governing body.

The provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding. The pupils enjoy participating in a wide range of activities and events, including charity fund raising and visits to the battlefields in Belgium. All these activities bring their curriculum to life. Senior pupils feel well prepared for life beyond school as a result of valuable careers guidance and opportunities to discuss their progress regularly with their teachers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching throughout the school including the sixth form, is generally outstanding and pupils in all key stages thrive and make excellent progress. Staff are expert, set challenging work and establish a climate, which encourages pupils to learn. A relentless pursuit of excellence is significantly raising standards and is exemplified by, for example, the very effective implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy, continuing staff development and work force re-modelling. Leading subjects, such as religious education, geography, science and mathematics, have been key in sharing good practice. The quality of the lesson plans seen by inspectors varied. Most were good, but a minority lacked sufficient detail and would be of little help to a supply teacher having to cover the lesson at short notice.

Staff develop very positive working relationships with pupils who respond well to the care and guidance they receive. Pupils are highly motivated and display excellent attitudes to learning. They know how well they are doing and what they need to do to progress further. Assessment is highly effective, as is the use of pupil performance data to highlight and address underachievement. Teaching is tailored to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities and strategies to accelerate learning and differentiate the work to suit their needs are well established. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent, enabling them to achieve as well as their peers.

There are sufficient, high quality resources and teachers make very effective use of these to engage, motivate and challenge pupils. Information and communications technology (ICT) is used creatively to enrich the learning experience, particularly in physical education, history and French. Specialist status has contributed to better teaching by improving resources, accommodation and equipment, and the promotion of innovative learning strategies.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school offers an outstanding curriculum both in the main school and in the sixth form. Statutory requirements are met and the curriculum is responsive to local needs. Provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT is very good. The curriculum provides excellent opportunities for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to progress and perform very well. There are opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to follow a work-based learning course and all Year 11 pupils take part in a work experience programme. The school is constantly reviewing its curriculum in order to meet the changing needs of its pupils and is introducing an increasing range of vocational courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The sixth form curriculum comprises a wide range of GCE A-level and AS-level subjects plus a growing number of courses leading to the AVCE courses that enable pupils to continue with their vocational

studies. There are also GCSE re-sits and courses in ICT, critical thinking and religious studies and ethics. There is a high level of pupil involvement in the extensive enrichment programme that is available at lunchtime, after school and at the weekends. The school has also introduced 'alternative curriculum days' that allow opportunities for field trips, enterprise days and visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding and make a substantial contribution to pupil attainment. This is a school in which all pupils are equally valued whatever their background and ability and staff care greatly about the welfare of pupils. This manifests itself in the supportive roles undertaken by all staff, particularly tutors, mentors and pastoral leaders. Pupils are treated as individuals, and greatly appreciate the support and guidance they receive. Support and guidance to pupils in their transition from primary school to Notre Dame and prior to entry into the sixth form are exemplary.

Care and support for vulnerable young people are particularly good and the school strives to meet the individual needs of all pupils. There are very good arrangements for dealing with bullying and pupils feel safe. There are high quality procedures for child protection and good strategies for ensuring that those pupils most at risk of dropping out of education are encouraged to stay. Careful attention is paid to health and safety.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding and the clear educational vision of the headteacher is shared by all teaching and non-teaching members of staff. The senior management team leads by example, provides excellent support, and encourages middle managers to act upon their own initiative. As a result, monitoring systems are robust and there is a strong emphasis on evaluating new developments against their impact on pupils' learning, achievement and personal growth. This is a high performing school in which there is no room for complacency. Staff work together well and, as teachers say, 'we share our successes with pleasure and identify our weaknesses without fear'. The school places maximum emphasis on continuous improvement.

Leadership of the sixth form is excellent and the strong teamwork of the staff ensures that all students feel valued and reach their full potential. Sixth form students pay tribute to the support they receive and say that they are made fully aware of employment opportunities and prospects for study beyond advanced level.

Across the whole school, the analysis of data is rigorous and realistic targets are set as a consequence. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored systematically and subject departments produce annual plans that feed directly into the school development documentation. Resources are deployed wisely and heads of department are confident they have the tools with which to move forward. Governors have an

accurate understanding of performance in all areas of school life and hold senior leaders to account very effectively. The governors also play an important role in maintaining and enhancing the inclusive environment of the school and promoting the Christian principles which underlie the work of Notre Dame.

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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

N/A

Following our inspection of the school we would like to tell you our findings. We were very impressed by Notre Dame High School which is outstanding in every way.

We found that your pass rates in examinations are extremely high and are well above the national average in many cases. We were particularly impressed with the way that pass rates continue to improve year by year. The school is really helping you to learn and to make good progress. Many of you are making better progress than you or the school might have expected when you first started. In the sixth form, you continue to make excellent progress and get higher grades than your GCSE results would suggest.

Teaching at the school is excellent. Your teachers are very knowledgeable and they work hard to ensure that you do your very best whatever your ability. We could see that you are very keen to learn and enjoy taking an active part in lessons. You clearly enjoy coming to school and there are very few absences. You also enjoy taking part in a very wide range of activities outside lessons including charity fund raising, sports and visits.

There is a strong Christian ethos at the school and you show concern and respect for each other. You receive outstanding care, guidance and support from staff. Notre Dame is a safe and happy school and your behaviour in and out of lessons is extremely good; all this helps you learn. Those of you with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and are well supported by the special educational needs co-ordinator and her team. Careers advice and guidance are excellent and Notre Dame prepares you well for life beyond school.

Mr Conway and his team of managers are doing an excellent job in leading and managing the school.

We would like to thank you for contributing to the inspection and for being so polite and helpful. We would also like to congratulate you on being part of such an outstanding school and wish you well for the future.