



# St Mary's Catholic Comprehensive School, Menston

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 108094  
**LEA** Leeds  
**Inspection number** 277902  
**Inspection dates** 11 January 2006 to 12 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Dr Linden Phillips HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Bradford Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Menston
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Ilkley, West Yorkshire LS29 6AE
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01943 883000
<b>Number on roll</b>	1129	<b>Fax number</b>	01943 870242
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Bob Lavery
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Michael Pyle

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 11 January 2006 - 12 January 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 277902
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

St Mary's Comprehensive School is a Catholic school catering for around 1100 pupils aged 11 - 19. It is non-selective and co-educational. Pupils come with higher than average attainment and most with better than average social and economic backgrounds. The school's pupils come mainly from white British backgrounds with around 6% from other ethnic groups. Only a very few do not have English as a first language. Fewer than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This school has been a Specialist Sports College since 2000 and has been re-designated in 2004 for a further 4 years. The school holds a number of recent good practice awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

St Mary's is a good school where a caring ethos provides a secure learning environment. The headteacher provides thoughtful and effective leadership within which sports college status has been clearly focussed on improvement. Resources have been deployed carefully and match the school's improvement plan to raise achievement for all. Sixth form management is very good. The school provides good value for money. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and many have written at length to praise the efforts of individual teachers in supporting their children. Pupils are well cared for and are encouraged to contribute to the wider world. Staff and parents work together well and ensure above average attendance. The majority of teaching is good, and some is outstanding. Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. Standards in public examinations are very high and this also reflects good progress. Matters identified in the last inspection report have been addressed and improved, although limited progress in information and communication technology ICT provision remains an issue of concern. However, there has been well-considered and energetic attention to improvement in this area of the curriculum and the school is clear in its intention to ensure all pupils benefit from their entitlement to ICT.

The school is completing a rigorous self-review within each department. Strengths of that process reflect the school's ability to build on very good practice, and also to be open in identifying areas which need attention; these features contribute well to the school's undoubted capacity to improve. The school is well placed to move forward.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The schools judges effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form to be good and inspectors agree. Teaching and learning are good and are sometimes outstanding. Students confirm that they enjoy their studies and that they are well supported both academically and personally.

The curriculum is satisfactory. In order to offer a selection of courses to meet the requirements and aspirations of its widening cohort of students, particularly for those students who do not benefit from studying traditional A levels, the school is involved in a growing collaboration with other local sixth forms. However, there are problems here, common to other schools, which mean that access to wider post 16 provision is not yet sufficiently utilised.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Students' progress is monitored and recorded well. Self evaluation is good with clearly identified strengths and weaknesses linked to actions needed to secure improvements. The sixth form gives good value for money.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure with some urgency that all pupils receive their entitlement to the full curriculum for ICT and citizenship.
- Monitor carefully the impact of the new curricular arrangements on the progress and achievement of all pupils.
- Building on the review of teaching and learning, look to raise the level of experience of pupils and students so that they grow as independent learners able to recognise and embrace creativity.
- Disseminate and permeate outstanding practice throughout the whole school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Overall, learners achieve well in the main school. They join from a large number of primary schools with standards that are exceptionally high. Very high standards are a consistent feature in the examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11. Achievement is highest in Key Stage 4, where results have risen strongly in recent years, with five-sixths of pupils now getting five or more higher grades. Within this good profile, the school recognises that while students achieve well, many have the capacity to meet more challenging targets.

In Key Stage 4, the school is particularly effective at identifying individuals and groups prone to underachievement and providing additional support for these pupils. Changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum, so that it better matches the needs of pupils, have also contributed to the improved results. The school has now rightly extended the Key Stage 4 intervention and support mechanisms to pupils underachieving in Key Stage 3. The achievement of all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is strikingly consistent. In recent years, the school has been particularly effective in raising the achievement of boys.

In the sixth form, students make good progress, and the overall proportion of students achieving high grades is well above the national average at GCE A and AS level. However, this is not yet uniformly so across all subjects. For example, attainment in recently introduced subjects such as psychology and design technology is not yet at the levels seen in many well established subjects.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are both good. The school is effective in helping pupils to develop their strengths of spiritual, moral, social and cultural approaches. There are strengths in a variety of curriculum areas, for example: experience of spirituality in religious education (RE); discussion of moral and ethical issues in history, RE, geography and science and the inclusion of a strong cultural dimension to Feast Days, and in history, RE and art. Pupils' and students' views are sought regularly. The sports department makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' social

development with over 80% of pupils gaining a sports leadership award. There is no systematic mapping of the development of this dimension across the curriculum, however, in order to maximise impact across the whole school.

Pupils enjoy school, are well-behaved and their attendance is very good. They feel safe. They are well educated about a healthy lifestyle and there is a good uptake of healthy food options and good participation in a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities. The school has gained a 'Healthy Schools' award. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through an active school council, drama and music productions, substantial fund-raising for charity and the impressive sports leader programme where pupils use their skills in the community - sometimes in the third world. There is a good programme of careers education and good advice regarding options. However, work-related learning skills are not developed in a coherent fashion across the curriculum.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school's recent review of teaching across departments has indicated that most teaching is good or better and lesson observation during inspection confirmed this view. The school uses its teachers' skills well in successfully training and giving confidence to student teachers within the school, and at the same time increasing the effectiveness of its own staff. The good standard of teaching ensures that pupils learn effectively and reach high standards in their work. Some teaching is outstanding. Common features of excellent experiences for pupils and students are engaging and exciting activities involving genuinely collaborative work. In these lessons teachers plan for an interesting variety of types of work including: listening, reading, discussing, analysing and presenting work to others. In mathematics classes, pupils are often encouraged to explain their own method of solving problems to others, making this a valuable experience for all pupils. A language lesson provided challenging work well matched to extend learners' current levels. Excellent questioning drew thoughtful answers from students. In one English lesson, different ability groups were well supported to select and combine information which resulted in imaginative presentations about their findings. Teachers in the school are confident and knowledgeable about their subjects; they plan well. Less effective practice includes too much teacher talk with insufficient opportunities for pupils to reflect and solve problems independently.

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses. There are some inconsistencies in teaching and in assessment. However there is also much good and some excellent practice which could usefully be disseminated.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The school's curriculum is satisfactory overall. In a recent change for Year 9, the school has introduced many aspects of the Key Stage 4 curriculum a year early. The eventual aim is for all the courses normally started in Year 10 to begin in Year 9. Although it is too

early to determine the impact of this change on pupils' progress, the initiative represents

an ambitious attempt to increase the challenge for pupils by enabling them to complete Key Stage 3 in two years and then to provide a broader curriculum in Key Stage 4.

The curriculum for years 9, 10 and 11 has improved considerably since the last inspection, with the addition of several new vocational subjects that represent more appropriate courses for many pupils. However, the school does not fully meet statutory requirements because it does not ensure that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow the programmes of study for ICT. There are also weaknesses in the arrangements for citizenship in Years 9, 10 and 11. Although pupils do study some aspects of citizenship, the school does not have a sufficiently clear picture of exactly what is being taught, and

in which subjects, to ensure that all pupils cover all the required topics.

The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are generally well supported in lessons and enabled to make good progress.

The school has been a Specialist Sports College since 2000. The specialist status has been well used by the school to broaden the opportunities for pupils, both within and beyond the curriculum. It has also provided a lead in raising standards across the school

- all this despite identified limitations in the accommodation for physical education. Pupils

value and enjoy the very good range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides. There is a comprehensive and increasing range of opportunities for sport, physical education, music and drama.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care for pupils is good. There are good arrangements to ensure the health and safety of pupils and risks are assessed carefully before activities are undertaken. Child protection procedures are in place but training for some staff has been delayed and

has had to be rescheduled. There is good careers advice and guidance relating to options which has led to recognition by the local authority. There is an effective pastoral system which draws on the skills of a learning mentor, chaplain and lay chaplain. There are effective monitoring procedures to identify underachievers and pupils with behavioural or other difficulties. These pupils are mentored and closely monitored. There is an innovative scheme in place for students in Years 11, 12 and 13 to act as peer mentors, giving valued support to pupils lower in the school. These student mentors are trained and gain accreditation from their experience. There are good links with other agencies to ensure that pupils at risk make good progress. There are good pastoral links with partner primary schools but the school has identified the scope for greater curriculum continuity.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's commitment to Catholic principles underpins its ethos and all that it does. In addition, the leadership team, governors and staff share a determination to provide the best possible education for pupils. The school's self-evaluation is accurate: it identifies weaknesses openly and honestly and plans well for improvement. However some planned improvements, notably to the curriculum, have not been implemented successfully. For example, the school has made good progress overall since it was last inspected but there are areas where full compliance with statutory requirements are lacking.

The school is well managed and runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. As the school has successfully implemented workforce reforms, the school's support, administrative and other non-teaching staff play an increasingly important and responsible part in ensuring the school's success.

The school monitors teaching and learning thoroughly, particularly using departmental reviews. The findings are carefully evaluated and appropriate action taken to overcome any weaknesses. The result has been significant recent improvements in examination results, particularly in GCSE design technology and art. Heads of department monitor the effectiveness of their teams, but there is some variation in the rigour of that monitoring and hence some inconsistencies in, for example, the emphasis that teachers place on developing pupils' literacy skills.

Pupils report that the school does listen to and value their views, particularly the suggestions made by the school council. Parents are frequently invited into the school and have regular opportunities to give their opinions. The governing body provides good support for the school. Governors are now suitably challenging and prepared to ask probing questions when the senior leadership team proposes changes.

The school has recently modified the staffing structure and made important changes to the curriculum. It is too early to assess the impact of these initiatives but both show the school's determination to move forward, to provide more challenge and better opportunities for pupils. Such innovations indicate the school's good 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>	<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>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
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>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

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

<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>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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 very much for welcoming us at St Mary's. You were very helpful in meetings, during lessons and when guiding us around the school. You told us that you enjoy being at the school and like your teachers and staff. We also enjoyed our visit.

We agree with your headteacher and staff that St Mary's is a good school which helps you make progress in your learning and attain very high standards. You and your parents work hard to support the school. One way you show this is through your attendance, which is outstanding. Although there are some things which your parents think could be improved, they are also overwhelmingly happy with the school and many wrote to tell us about individual teachers who give their time to help you.

The school also considers your health and well-being. You have told us about playing your part in deciding healthy options for lunch. We were very impressed by the fact that 80% of you gain the Junior Sports Leader Award: this is a real achievement both in keeping fit and developing qualities of organising and leading.

Teachers are knowledgeable in their subjects and plan their lessons well. There is good support in class for those of you who need particular help. Staff also provide good guidance for you to make your choices in continuing learning.

We agree that St Mary's is determined to improve things further and have asked your school to consider these things. Inspectors are concerned that the study of the skills and knowledge of information and communication technology (ICT) is not available to all of you in Years 10 and 11, and have asked the school to complete their planning to improve this quickly.

The new arrangements for what you learn in Years 7 and 8 before moving to higher level work in Year 9 is a very new idea. The school expects this to help you learn more and gain better examination results. We have asked them to check carefully that this happens.

The school is looking hard to improve teaching further in all subjects and should help you become more independent in your learning so that you can improve your achievement - particularly in finding creative solutions to problems.

Overall, we would like the excellent experience which you enjoy in much of the school to be the same throughout.