



Saint Gregory's Catholic College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109329
LEA Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number 278186
Inspection dates 15 November 2005 to 16 November 2005
Reporting inspector Faysal Mikdadi RISP

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Combe Hay Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Odd Down
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Bath BA2 8PA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01225 832873
Number on roll	800	Fax number	01225 835848
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev Tom Gunning
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr Raymond Friel

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 15 November 2005 - 16 November 2005	Inspection number 278186
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Saint Gregory's Catholic College is a small comprehensive school on the south-western edge of the City of Bath. Half the students are bussed in from a wide area. The college has gained Performing Arts specialist status and has been designated as a high performing Beacon school by the Department for Education and Skills. The college has close links with its partner primary schools as well as with the Catholic sixth form college in the Bristol area. Students are mainly White British, with a small number coming from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the college is good. Overall leadership by key staff and by the governing body is good. Outstanding monitoring and evaluation by the headteacher and key leaders have had a strong impact, for example, on improving boys' achievement in Years 10 and 11. This improvement over the last three years has brought boys' performance nearer to girls' by the summer of 2005. Targets set for the 2006 GCSE results show the college's expectation that students will achieve their potential. Improvements made, particularly over the last year, show that the college has a strong capacity for further improvement.

As a result of the good teaching, students make good progress, especially in Years 7 to 9. Progress made in Years 10 and 11, although good overall, is not as dramatic as that made in the first three years. This differential has begun to lessen, as shown by the 2005 GCSE results. Such rising standards are currently being maintained.

Improvements in standards happened mainly because the college is successful in identifying its areas of weakness and taking successful action to make improvements.

Students at Saint Gregory's are safe and happy. Their behaviour in the classrooms and around the college is outstanding. An outstanding curriculum provides many opportunities for students to learn and do well. The college is particularly effective in working with its partners such as the primary schools and sixth forms. The result is a smooth transition for students into and out of the college. Improvements since the last inspection have been good, with information and communications technology (ICT) now being an integral part of older students' learning. The college gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take further action to ensure that the recent increases in the GCSE results are enhanced further so that all students in Years 10 and 11 fully achieve their potential.
- Ensure that in the few lessons mentioned below students always take more active note of their teachers' advice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When students start college, attainment is above average. By the end of Year 9, standards are high because students make good progress and achieve well. The end-of-year test results over the last three years have been consistently above national averages in English, mathematics and science. In the last two years, the number of students attaining the higher levels, especially in English, has declined. The value added in English remained significantly higher than the national average. The English department has analysed reasons for the relative decline and produced an action plan which is currently being implemented successfully.

Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. GCSE results have been consistently above the national averages. Boys in Years 10 and 11 had been under-achieving, given their prior attainment. The college put strategies in place to help boys do better with the result that over the last three years their GCSE results have improved steadily. Consequently, by 2005, the gap between the boys' and girls' performance at GCSE has narrowed considerably. Current realistic targets for the summer of 2006 would, if achieved, bring GCSE results to where students' prior attainment indicates they should be. At this stage, although GCSE results are well above the national averages, they do not show the same strong and continuous progress students make in their first three years.

All students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress because of outstanding procedures for monitoring teaching and learning. This results in a thorough understanding of individual needs, which leads to measures which enhance achievement. For example, GCSE results in mathematics, design and technology and religious education in 2005 improved significantly over those of 2004 because of rigorous monitoring followed by successful action.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' excellent behaviour and attitudes show that the college is effective in promoting personal development. Attendance, which has fluctuated over several years, is now above national average as a result of very good intervention by the college. Exclusion levels are low. As a result of very good re-integration strategies, only very few students are excluded more than once. Students from all year groups feel that their opinions are valued and acted upon through the senate. The school council has promoted healthy living very effectively. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Cultural development is strongly reflected in music, performing arts and in many other subjects. Drug and alcohol abuse and sex education are covered well within personal, social and health education lessons. The college successfully promotes students' understanding and appreciation of British cultural diversity.

Wide-ranging sporting and performing arts activities are popular. Out-of-college activities provide good opportunities for social development through working in teams and participating in residential trips. Performing arts school status is used very effectively to promote personal development. Fund-raising and performing arts activities enable very good links with the community. Liaison with primary schools is excellent. Preparation for students' economic well-being is very good because of good work experience for older students and a comprehensive work-related learning programme throughout the college. Students understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The college makes particular efforts to teach students about healthy eating. External agencies such as the police and career advisors make a valuable contribution to students' personal development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the college because the high level of challenge to students of all abilities ensures that they make good progress. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan a wide variety of experiences that encourage students by engaging their interest. Positive reaction by teachers to students' comments gives them confidence to think independently. A few lessons are dominated by the views of the teacher and sometimes students take too little note of teachers' advice. Resources, including interactive whiteboards, are used well to involve students actively in lessons. Students understand their targets and know how to improve because teachers use assessment well to promote learning, giving useful advice in marking.

Students with learning difficulties are supported well in lessons, with specific support for literacy to allow them to cope with the demands of normal work. Gifted and talented students are challenged through additional demands made on them. Both groups therefore progress at the same rate as other students. Teachers show respect for students' views, usually insisting that they support opinions with evidence. Students show in surveys and discussions that they appreciate the good teaching in the college.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The college's curriculum is outstanding. The lower school offers a full range of national curriculum subjects and religious education. In addition, students can choose to study Italian or German. Upper school students now have outstanding opportunities to match courses to their needs. The college ensures that all students follow subjects which develop their basic skills. Courses provided by the local college link well to preparation for the workplace. Work experience for all Year 10 students improves their understanding of economic well-being and the world of work. Personal, social and health education, including citizenship, enhances the students' personal development. An exceptional range of courses includes the organisation by upper school students of a crèche for local families. Healthy living is encouraged through the appropriate time given to physical education coupled with the successful promotion of healthy food. Literacy and numeracy strategies are planned effectively across all subjects. Students' awareness of other cultures is developed well in lessons.

The college's status as a Performing Arts College supports an outstanding range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, both for students and for the wider community. An exceptional variety of residential courses, retreats and educational visits broadens the perspectives of all students. Visiting musicians, artists and poets from many cultures are very well used to inspire performances throughout the area, especially the annual arts festival. Students spoke highly of a recent visit by a Palestinian dance company as well as of their own contributions to the current production of *Oliver*.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding care, guidance and support derive from the high commitment of staff. All students feel safe and well supported through outstanding spiritual and moral guidance. Excellent arrangements for safeguarding students are in place. Students know how well they are doing through regular monitoring letters sent home. Advice on how they can improve is applied consistently. In this safe and supportive environment, students strive to reach challenging targets. Parents are very pleased with the support given to their children and they value regular meetings with staff. They say that "values and respect fostered within the college are wonderful". Staff have excellent links with outside agencies. These provide good information about students' circumstances and needs.

Arrangements for supporting vulnerable students and for their re-integration after a period of exclusion are also excellent. Child protection and health and safety procedures are fully in place and well understood. Students know where to turn if they have problems and counselling is available. Very little bullying occurs, but when it does, it is well handled, so students feel safe. Students in Year 7 feel very well supported in moving from their primary school and enjoy their new college. Students have exceptional relationships with their mentors and receive detailed guidance on their next steps.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

College leadership and management are good. Strong focus on care and guidance for all students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, underpins managers' successful work at all levels. A supportive Christian ethos lies at the heart of all decision-making, as does staff welfare. Recent restructuring of the leadership team has led to effective distribution of responsibilities. A clear sense of common purpose and a strong vision based on commonly agreed values inform the work of all staff.

Monitoring and the self-evaluation of the college's work are outstanding. As a result, awareness of the under-achievement of Year 10 and 11 boys has led to improvement this year. Recently implemented faculty reviews provide effective mechanisms for improving achievement. Increasing involvement of staff in evaluating their own effectiveness now reinforces this. These and other procedures for ensuring accountability are starting to have good impact on standards. Management of subjects and other areas is also good. Performing Arts status has a very positive impact on provision across many subjects. Staffing and other resources are well deployed to provide a high quality of education.

Governance is good. Governors play an increasingly active part in college life. Sub-committees have become particularly effective. Relatively recent involvement in evaluation and strategic planning is strengthening their role. Good recruitment has

secured a committed and experienced staff. Finances are stable. The bursar is now an effective member of the senior leadership team.

Improvement since the last report has been good. Leaders and managers demonstrate good capacity to improve further. Evaluation such as college judgements about the quality of teaching is accurate. Effective action is taken when shortcomings, such as those recognised in achievement in Years 10 and 11, are revealed.

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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?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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	2	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?	1	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	1	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	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	NA
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

I am writing to tell you about our recent visit to your school. I would like to start off by saying thank very much for the way that you made us feel so welcome and for talking to us about your school. My team and I have carried away a lot of fond memories of our visit. Personally, I shall always remember the moving assembly about the disruption of the lives of the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert. I shall also think fondly of the dance performances that I saw in the drama studio during the lunch break.

Yours is a good school. You make good progress because of the good teaching, the effective assessment and the outstanding curriculum. The headteacher and his senior team are outstanding in the way that they monitor and evaluate all aspects of your work. Their leadership and management are good. The result of such monitoring can be seen in the significant improvements that have been made in your GCSE results in 2005. The boys now do almost as well as the girls, which was an area for development that senior leaders had identified in their planning.

You told us that you felt safe and happy. As a result of this and the many other positive aspects of your school, you have outstanding attitudes to your work and your behaviour is excellent. Teachers and other adults take such excellent care of you that you are able to get on with your work and make good progress. You do particularly well in Years 7 to 9. We have suggested in our report that the college now needs to make sure that the improvements that you make in your first three years are matched by similar speedy improvements in Years 10 and 11. That way, the GCSE results will improve even more, as they have done in 2005. You can play an important part in this by always listening to your teachers' advice.

Many of you said that you were proud of your school. We fully understand why you are. This is good place to learn in and we wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr F H Mikdadi Lead inspector