



St Paul's Catholic School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110517
LEA Milton Keynes LEA
Inspection number 278450
Inspection dates 28 September 2005 to 29 September 2005
Reporting inspector Janet Mercer HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Phoenix Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Leadenhall
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Milton Keynes MK6 5EN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01908 669735
Number on roll	1602	Fax number	01908 676206
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Marc Aukland
Date of previous inspection	19 June 2000	Headteacher	Mr Michael Manley

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 28 September 2005 - 29 September 2005	Inspection number 278450
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors.

Description of the school

St Paul's Catholic School is the only catholic secondary school in Milton Keynes and is larger than average. The number of pupils increased from 1327 pupils in 2004 to 1602 in 2005, as a result of schools reorganisation in Milton Keynes. The school has a full intake of year 7 pupils for the first time in Sept 2005. The school gained specialist status in science in 2003 and became a designated training school in the same year. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, has risen in recent years and is now significantly higher than the national average. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language has increased from 5.7% in 1997 to 7.2% in 2004. The school has specialist provision for pupils with visual impairment and those on the autistic spectrum.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Paul's Catholic school is an outstanding school which provides excellent care, support and guidance for its pupils and enables them to achieve very high academic standards. Through highly effective management and the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, well supported by the governing body, the school has continued to improve since its largely favourable previous inspection. The school has effectively addressed all areas identified for improvement in the last inspection and demonstrates very good capacity to improve further. The management team has a very sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, demonstrated by their excellent self-evaluation. The head teacher, supported by governors, sets a clear direction for the school. The governing body fulfils its role very well in supporting and challenging the school to improve. The school provides excellent value for money. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets most needs and is supported and extended by a wide range of extra curricular activities, which are well attended by pupils. Teaching is good overall. In the best lessons teachers make learning fun and pupils clearly enjoy their work. Pupils generally behave very well and attendance is above the average for maintained secondary schools. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school and are very pleased with how the school supports its pupils and with its high academic standards.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that provision for students in the sixth form is good. The school offers vocational courses in business, engineering, health and social care and information technology as well as a wide range of subjects at AS and A level. Pass rates for AS and A level courses are in line with the national average and a high proportion of students complete their courses. The school's inclusive policy for entry to the sixth form means that students' prior attainment is broadly in line with the national average. The school sets challenging targets and most students make the progress expected of them, with many making good progress relative to their prior attainment. However, the proportion attaining higher grades is below the national average. This is because, although the overall quality of teaching is good, students' skills are not yet being developed sufficiently to achieve the higher grades. The school is well aware of this issue and is striving to increase the numbers of pupils who achieve higher grades through well focused staff development and support for inexperienced teachers. Students receive good careers education and guidance and a high proportion of students progress to higher education. In 2005 all students who applied for higher education gained places at universities with nine out of ten obtaining their first choice.

What the school should do to improve further

To raise standards even further the school should improve the consistency of planning for different tasks in lessons to ensure that higher achieving pupils are fully challenged

Develop the skills of students in the 6th form to enable a greater proportion of them to achieve higher grades.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils enter the school with broadly average standards and achieve well above average standards by the end of Key Stage 4. They generally meet or exceed the challenging targets they are set. The overall progress pupils make from when they start school to the end of Key Stage 4 is outstanding. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science and achieve above average standards. In English slightly fewer pupils reach the higher levels of attainment at Key Stage 3 than might be expected. The school has identified the reasons for this and is taking appropriate steps to address it. Pupils make excellent progress at Key Stage 4 and the percentage who get five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C is well above the national average. Standards in GCSE English, mathematics and science are well above average. There are variations in performance between subjects and the school has convincing strategies in place to tackle this. The gap between the performance of girls and boys is substantially narrower than that found nationally. Pupils with learning difficulties, pupils from different ethnic groups and the very few pupils in public care make good progress and achieve well. Higher attaining students in English and mathematics are stretched by being entered for GCSE a year early and by taking AS level courses in Key Stage 4.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Most pupils have a very good attitude to school and this contributes strongly to their academic success. Well applied behaviour policies and consistent staff expectations mean that, with a few exceptions usually where teaching is less effective, pupils behave very well. Attendance has improved markedly in the last few years because of careful monitoring and follow up and is now well above average. Pupils speak enthusiastically of the way they are involved in the many activities the school offers. The wide range of activities in sport, drama, music, after school clubs and visits contribute very strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils respond very well to the school's Christian values. They have a very well developed sense of what is right and wrong. They feel valued by staff and they value each other. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are excellent. The school is a very harmonious community in which respect for other people is a strong feature. The school community is drawn from many ethnic groups. Pupils regard this diversity as a strength which is used well by the school to develop awareness of many cultures and traditions. Pupils are aware of the essentials of a healthy and safe life. Many work for the good of others in and outside the school community, especially through charity fund raising. There are many opportunities to be of service to the school community, for example in year

councils and as form representatives, which pupils readily take up. The high academic standards pupils achieve together with other opportunities they grasp through work experience and industry days prepare them well for future working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching is promoting effective learning for the vast majority of pupils. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to build confidence of pupils and respond to their questions. Teachers establish excellent relationships characterised by encouragement, warmth of response and sensitivity that leads to respectful attitudes and high standards of behaviour. Pupils achieve very well and gain considerable enjoyment from learning because teachers make every effort to make lessons fun. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to stimulate pupils' interest in lessons. The pace of learning is often brisk and well focused because teachers have very clear knowledge of pupils' needs. Planning and organisation overall are good and work matches the needs of pupils in general. However, in some instances, mainly in years 7 to 9, teachers have not prepared tasks to challenge or interest the more able pupils. Where learning support assistants are deployed, pupils with special educational needs or who have English as an additional language are well supported and achieve as well as other pupils. Assessment is used very effectively to help pupils improve their work, although there are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking in a few subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding at all stages in the school. There is an extensive breadth reflected particularly in Years 10 and 11 by a balance of vocational as well as academic courses. Applied GCSE subjects have been introduced in particular to meet the needs and aspirations of pupils. All statutory requirements are met and citizenship is embedded well into the programme for personal and social education. Provision for ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection. Opportunities for enrichment are wide ranging and contribute significantly to personal development and pupils' enjoyment of school. The school provides an excellent extended curriculum which is taught outside normal hours and enables pupils to pursue their interest in a diverse range of areas including additional languages, business enterprise and Greek theatre. Good use is made of external resources for example in hosting an 'industry day' to enrich pupils' economic and business understanding. The curriculum is very effective in meeting the needs of the local community and employers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support of pupils are major strengths of the school. The leadership seeks to make this a hallmark of the school and makes a significant investment in it. Parents are strongly appreciative of this and are well informed about their children's progress through written reports and mentoring days. Pupils speak warmly of how they are well known as individuals and the approachability of staff. Staff work co-operatively to ensure that pupils feel well cared for and supported. This strong individual support, combined with careful monitoring of attendance and progress enables pupils to achieve well and succeed in many areas of school life. The care and support make an excellent contribution to pupils' happiness and enjoyment of school, and the security they feel. Pupils feel safe knowing that there will be a rapid and usually effective response to any bullying and harassment. Good provision is made for the protection of vulnerable children. Arrangements made for pupils who need additional support because of special educational needs or because they are at an early stage of learning English are well organised and help them to make good progress. Pupils welcome the ready access they have to various base rooms at break and lunchtime where support staff are ready to help and encourage them. Advice and guidance for pupils when they make decisions about courses and careers are very effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are outstanding overall and good in the sixth form. The headteacher, with the support of governors and senior managers, provides inspirational leadership. This successfully focuses the attention of all members of the school community on ensuring all learners achieve their best both in their academic and personal development. Through a very rigorous and effective system of self-evaluation managers have a clear and accurate view of the strengths of the school. Areas for further improvement are reflected in the school improvement plan. Managers have identified the need to raise standards further in the sixth form and are actively working with teachers to implement improvement strategies. The system in place to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning has ensured that high standards have been maintained during a period of high staff turnover and recruitment required to take on a full cohort of year 7 pupils for the first time. This has been enhanced by the school's outstanding commitment to and provision for staff development. As a specialist training school it has developed new teachers who are nurtured in a most productive manner. The value placed on the importance of all members of staff has created excellent teamwork which has a major impact on the support, care and guidance given to all pupils. The school is fully inclusive. Governors carry out their role effectively especially in setting the ethos for the school. Financial planning is very good and resources are used very effectively to help the school successfully meet its aims, including the recent

improvements to the accommodation, which is now good. Resources, including staff, are deployed very effectively with the school providing excellent value for money. The school is well supported by its parents and is popular with prospective parents. Partnerships with outside agencies effectively support the work of the school.

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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	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	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	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	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	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
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	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	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

My colleagues and I greatly enjoyed visiting your school on the 28th and 29th of September. Thank you for making us feel welcome and for talking to us, both in some of your lessons and in other groups. Many of you told us that you enjoy school and the many different activities which you take part in. Some of your parents/carers responded to a confidential questionnaire and we also took their views and concerns into account when making our judgements. We encourage you to read the report as it will let you know in more detail what your school does well and how you can help your school to be even better.

St Paul's Catholic School is an outstanding school which provides excellent care and support and enables most of you to get very good results. The main strengths are: * good teaching * excellent results in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations * the good progress you make in your work * excellent relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils * good behaviour in lessons and around the school * a good range of activities outside normal school hours, which many of you take part in * outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher and senior staff

We have made a few recommendations, in order to make an excellent school even better. * teachers should plan to have a greater range of tasks in lessons to ensure all of you learn as much as you possibly can. * the school should focus on developing teaching in the 6th form to enable more of you to achieve the higher grades in your exams.