



All Hallows Catholic High School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 111458
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 278704
Inspection dates 21 September 2005 to 22 September 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Leszek Iwaskow HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Brooklands Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Macclesfield
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Cheshire SK11 8LB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01625 426138
Number on roll	1178	Fax number	01625 500315
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs B Kershaw
Date of previous inspection	29 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr R Weremczyk

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 21 September 2005 - 22 September 2005	Inspection number 278704
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a Roman Catholic, voluntary aided 11-18 mixed comprehensive school with a sixth form broadly in line with the size of other sixth forms. The school overall is larger than average with 1,131 pupils. Recent local secondary school reorganisation has led to expansion and an extensive ongoing building programme.

The pupils are drawn from a relatively wide area and the intake is predominantly of pupils from white British backgrounds. Attainment on entry is well above average. Few pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has a stable pupil population in both the main school and sixth form.

There have been significant changes to the leadership group over the past three years and recently another new group has been established. There has also been a significant turnover of staff over the last two years.

The school is linked for a variety of purposes with its partner primary schools, the other three high schools across the town and a special school. Local consortium arrangements for sixth form provision are at a very early stage of development.

Currently, an application for specialist school status in mathematics and computing is being prepared.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school considers itself to be providing a good education for all of its pupils and students. Inspectors judge this not to be the case. Pupils and students attain above average standards but most could achieve better. The greater majority show maturity and great potential, however, provision in the school currently does not fully meet their needs. There is great variation and inconsistency in the progress the pupils and students make in different subjects with different teachers. Many are not provided with sufficient challenges to match their abilities. This is especially evident for the more able pupils and students.

Communication within the school and across the wider community is not always perceived to be effective with parents particularly expressing concerns. Management has not fully understood that putting processes into place does not necessarily lead to success or impact on pupils' and students' learning and development. Initiatives have lacked rigour and sustained impact. Weaknesses in provision have not been sufficiently challenged. Since the last inspection, leadership and management at all levels have not shown sufficient capacity to improve and meet the many new, innovative and exciting challenges facing schools today. The school is judged to be ineffective overall and as such cannot be providing satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school judges sixth form provision to be very effective and in some respects it is. Students enjoy very good relationships with their peers, are well supported and guided by their teachers and tutors, retention rates are high and progress into further education or employment is secure. Even though standards are relatively high they could be consistently better. Students' academic achievement is only satisfactory compared to their abilities. There is some variation in departmental performance and examination results. The use of data to set clear targets for students to support their learning is underdeveloped. Measures to monitor underperformance are not rigorous enough. The relative status of the head of sixth form impedes her ability to exert major influence on the sixth form's development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that management at all levels is working effectively in partnership to improve the level of provision and outcomes for pupils.
- Ensure greater consistency across the school in terms of teaching and learning as well as subject leadership and management in order to raise achievement.

- Develop more effective and clear communication within the school and with the wider school community in order to promote more effective partnership with parents and learners in order to meet their varying needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards of pupils on entry to the school are considerably above average but are only average in relation to their abilities when they leave the school. Their progress therefore through the school is only satisfactory. Overall, most make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. On the whole, examination results are well above the national average in both the main school and sixth form. However, there is marked variation between the results of different subjects from one year to the next. At general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) pupils usually perform well in English literature, design technology and physical education, but not in mathematics. In the sixth form results tend to be higher in English language and business studies and less good in information and communication technology (ICT). The variability between subjects prevents pupils' overall progress from being more than satisfactory. Throughout the school teachers are not being consistent in making effective use of information about pupils' performance. Consequently, they do not set rigorous enough targets in order to check pupils' and students' progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most pupils enjoy being part of this school. In the main they speak warmly about staff and are happy to talk about their work and involvement in extra-curricular activities. Some show pride in representing the school in local sports competitions, for example. Supportive relationships are evident in many areas of the school. Attendance is satisfactory overall but some pupils do not always arrive on time for lessons.

Pupils show growth in elements of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Peer mentors in Years 10 and 11 have had some success when working with the younger year groups. They help them to settle in and generally provide positive role models. Most pupils are keen to learn. Many pupils are cooperative, particularly when teachers provide them with opportunities to work with others and inject lessons with enthusiastic teaching. However, there are times when pupils feel less comfortable in school, such as at lunchtimes and in some lessons. The school still has some work to do to make these pupils feel more secure. Some pupils and parents express concerns about consistent personal experiences of inappropriate behaviour.

Pupils listen to the school's positive messages about healthy lifestyles but many have yet to put these ideas into practice. Pupils do not yet receive enough opportunities to learn about what it means to live in a multicultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors found teaching and learning to be satisfactory in the main school and the sixth form. This differs from the school's judgement of good. There is variation in teaching despite some good and occasionally outstanding lessons. This results in overall progress that is no better than satisfactory. It also contributes to the differences in examination results between subjects.

In the best lessons good use of open-ended questions and tasks frequently challenge learners to think and work independently. These lessons often include the chance to work with others. Learners clearly enjoy these ways of working. In drama and art such methods helped Year 10 pupils to deepen their appreciation of techniques when they assessed each other's work. In the less effective lessons the teachers tend to direct the lesson too much. The learners do not have enough chance to think for themselves. The work does not always challenge the different levels of abilities in a class, especially the more able. The pace of learning in these lessons tends to be slower. As a result the pupils have less enthusiasm and do not do as well as they could.

There is a similar lack of consistency in the way teachers use assessment and give feedback to pupils. While teachers of design technology and business make sure that all learners know how well they are doing and how to improve, this does not happen as effectively in all lessons. Recent initiatives to make better use of assessment to improve learning have still to make an impact across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

An appropriate range of subjects is provided in Key Stage 3. There is a suitable balance of mixed ability and setted groups to support teaching. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 has recently expanded to include two vocational subjects in which pupils have not yet taken external examinations. Progression routes for these pupils into the sixth form have not yet been settled. Non-examination courses, such as personal, social, health and citizenship education have recently been strengthened. Improvement in ICT provision has been too slow and the majority of Key Stage 4 pupils still do not receive their proper entitlement. Literacy and numeracy initiatives have not been established well enough to promote standards across the curriculum. The school has been slow to focus on the needs of gifted and talented pupils. Very recent initiatives are providing better opportunities for some more able pupils in mathematics and science in Year 10. The sixth form curriculum is broadened by the provision of general studies courses for which all pupils are entered. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities with good participation rates, for example, in music and sport. Careers guidance in lessons has been improved and support from the onsite Connexions service

is good. The views of pupils and parents on the curriculum have not been sought directly.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The commitment of key staff to assure the general safety and well-being of pupils is tangible as they speak with passion about the impact they have on outcomes for some of the most vulnerable members of the school community. Pupils' individual circumstances are carefully considered and the school makes every effort to reintegrate disaffected pupils and to support their successful return to school. There are some striking success stories of pupils with significant personal or behavioural issues being sensitively addressed by experienced staff. Day to day behavioural routines are less secure. The school has already recognised this and has started to take action to tackle the issue of the day-to-day behaviour of pupils. However, a small but significant number of both parents and pupils have expressed real concerns about incidents of bullying and the effectiveness of the school's response. Generally, parents appreciate the levels of care shown to their children.

The school provides good levels of support and guidance for sixth form students and these help them move on successfully to the world of work or further education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

The overall quality of leadership and management at all levels is inadequate. The inspection findings differ from the school's evaluation of its performance in all aspects of provision. There is not a well ordered sense of priorities. Across management there has been a lack of a shared understanding of the key priorities which will need to be developed to move the school forward. The headteacher has not evaluated well enough the school's effectiveness nor identified priorities for improvement which reflect the school's greatest needs. The governing body is supportive but has not been sufficiently active as a 'critical friend' to monitor developments and effect change. Issues linked to behaviour, bullying and underachievement at higher grades have not been challenged with sufficient rigour. A policy on race equality has not been fully implemented as required.

Many systems and procedures have been put into place but their impact in moving the school forward has been piecemeal and not always sustained. For example, whole school awareness of the key area of literacy across the curriculum was initially raised. However, management did not ensure that the momentum to improve quality across the school was maintained. Coordination and management of this important area are not evident.

Many inconsistencies in aspects of school life are evident. This is apparent through the variable performance of curriculum areas, variations in quality of teaching and learning and differences across the school in the quality of subject management. After a period of management instability recent changes to the senior management team structure are a positive move. These changes have not had time to impact significantly and initiate improvement across the school.

Management has been unsatisfactory because teaching and learning have not been checked rigorously nor have underachieving departments been sufficiently challenged to enable them to improve quickly enough.

Communication within the school is not consistent. Pupils also lack a clear channel to express their opinions and some parents do not feel that sufficient account is taken of their views. The school does not yet focus sufficiently on pupils' learning and their outcomes and not all staff implement the school's systems as well or as consistently as they need to. There have been improvements in some areas since the last inspection but, significantly, some of these have been modest and other issues such as behaviour have not been fully addressed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	4	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	No
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	2

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?	4	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
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	No
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	No
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	No
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

Following our visit to inspect your school we would like to tell you about the things we found out. You will no doubt have heard that as a result of our visit we have decided that your school requires special measures. This means that although your school does some things well, in some very important areas there are weaknesses which we believe the school needs help to sort out to make your stay in the school even more rewarding.

When you talked to inspectors we were impressed with your maturity and potential. Although most of you work very hard you could be even more successful if the school received a little extra help to get better. You drew our attention to some issues which were causing you concern and which you felt should be improved. You particularly enjoyed those lessons where you had the opportunities to work together and become involved in practical activities. In those lessons where your teachers showed enthusiasm and energy you responded to the challenges and produced some exceptional work. We know that all your lessons are not like this. Most of you are keen to learn and don't like it when a small number disrupt lessons with poor behaviour. Over the coming months the teachers will be working very hard to bring about improvements that will make many more lessons interesting and enjoyable.

Many of you gain from participating in sporting and cultural activities in which you are able to show off many of your talents. We also noted that you enjoy and thrive on being given responsibilities. The peer mentor system in Years 10 and 11 is an example of this and reflects your concerns for younger pupils who are perhaps having difficulties or being bullied.

No doubt, when the new buildings are finally complete they will improve life in school for you and your teachers.

You will not be surprised that we have asked the school to improve the weaknesses identified above as quickly as possible. You and your teachers will be provided with support to carry out these improvements and Her Majesty's Inspectors will visit the school regularly to check the progress everyone is making.