



St John Payne Catholic Comprehensive School, Chelmsford

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115238
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279550
Inspection dates 5 October 2005 to 6 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs. Melanie Kavanagh LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Patching Hall Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		CM1 4BS
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01245256030
Number on roll	1146	Fax number	01245352337
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.M Hiom
Date of previous inspection	11 October 1999	Headteacher	Mr. Frank McEvoy

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 5 October 2005 - 6 October 2005	Inspection number 279550
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St John Payne is a voluntary aided Catholic comprehensive school. It is a specialist school in technology, a status it gained in 2003. The school is oversubscribed and is bigger than most other secondary schools. Over 80% of the students are from white British backgrounds with a broad range of other ethnic backgrounds represented in the remainder. The proportion of pupils and students eligible for free school meals and with special educational needs is lower than the national average. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs is also below the national average. The school is located on an attractive and spacious site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school is providing good education overall. There is a very strong ethos of care in a Christian community and the personal development of pupils and students is outstanding. The school provides a safe and secure environment within which pupils, students and staff feel valued. The sixth form is a strength of the school and its students provide support and care for younger pupils. Pupils receive good care and guidance both generally and in order to make informed choices about their careers and progress. Overall, the parent questionnaire, used as part of the inspection, provided strong support for the school. However, a number of parents feel that the school should take more account of their views and the views of their children. Achievement and standards in the school are good and some aspects are very good. The quality of teaching is good and most students achieve good standards and progress well. Inspectors agreed with the school's judgement that the number of pupils achieving high grades in examinations should be increased. Most teachers provide thoroughly prepared and effective lessons where it is clear to pupils what they must achieve to progress and improve their work. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to use a wide range of teaching methods and encourage pupils to actively participate in their learning. The curriculum provided is good. The school has developed strong links with local schools through its status as a specialist technology college. The sixth form curriculum has been broadened effectively with a choice of vocational subjects. The school has made significant improvements in the main issues identified at the last inspection. The school's self-evaluation report is built on departmental evaluations and provides accurate judgements on most of its strengths and weaknesses. Whilst inspectors agreed with the school's assessment that its teaching is good, further improvements to the lesson observation system are needed in order to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching. Staff morale is high and senior and middle managers are accountable for their areas of work. The school has good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money. Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. This matches the school's own evaluation. There is a good range of provision. Pass rates are very good and most students achieve well above what might be expected from their qualifications on entry. However, in some subjects too few students achieve the highest grades. Teaching is mostly good. However, sufficient attention is not always given by teachers to the development of independent learning skills and critical thought. Personal and pastoral support for students is good. Students are confident, well motivated and enjoy their learning. They make significant contributions to the life of the school and provide good role models for younger pupils. Managers have identified the areas for improvement accurately and they are beginning to address them. The sixth form provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

Refine and develop lesson observation in order to bring about further improvements to teaching and learning - Ensure that the views of all parents and pupils are actively

sought and considered - Increase the proportion of students aged 16-19 gaining high grades in examinations

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The overall achievement of pupils and students is good. The school reaches or exceeds the challenging targets it sets itself. Achievement is particularly good in Key Stage 3 and is good in Key Stage 4. Pupils build well on the good skills they come into the school with and by the time they reach Year 11 they attain very good results in their GCSE exams. The percentage achieving five A*-C grades has been significantly above average since 2000. The school is aware of slightly lower achievement in some subjects such as history, music and physical education and has put in place strategies to raise achievement levels to those in similar subjects. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have been well above average for a number of years. The strongest progress is in science, although it is good in English and mathematics. The school works hard at, and is successful at, maintaining these high standards through Key Stage 4. The school is highly aware of gender differences in attainment nationally and works hard to ensure that boys' achievement is good. This year the boys achieved better than girls in their examinations. Pupils with special educational needs achieve soundly although the gap between their progress and that of other pupils widens in Key Stage 4. Achievement in the sixth form is very good and pupils reach high standards overall. Students achieve well above what could be expected from their qualifications on entry. Inspectors confirm the school's evaluation that the number of students attaining high grades should be increased.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils mature rapidly as they progress through the school and are exceptionally well-rounded. They have clear views on school life and express themselves eloquently but also listen and reflect very well on what others say. They are extremely polite, very well behaved young adults who enjoy school. They are proud of their school, and they are being very well prepared for the next stage of life. They take responsibility readily, for example as active school council members, and recently spread the message about St John Payne and the power of their faith to primary schools in the locality. Attendance levels are high and there is a real community spirit within the school. Pupils work very hard to support others through events such as charity fund-raising. As a result, they make a highly significant contribution to the school and wider community. Their moral and spiritual development is outstanding and they have a very strong understanding of other cultures and faiths. Pupils have a very good knowledge of healthy lifestyles, reflected in the school council's initiative for a salad bar at lunchtime. Pupils enjoy physical activities, and actively involve themselves in a range of extra-curricular sports and games. They are clear on how to keep safe and about safety issues in general, and are well guided by the school in this respect.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some outstanding lessons. In the many lessons which are at least good, teachers display a strong knowledge of their subject, plan challenging learning activities and make it clear to pupils what the purpose of the lesson is. Pupils and students respond with enthusiasm and interest to teachers' high expectations. They work hard and make good progress. In outstanding lessons, the active involvement of pupils in a variety of tasks moves learning forward at a fast pace. In satisfactory lessons, the pace of working is slower. These lessons are orderly and purposeful but opportunities are missed to assess pupils' and students' progress and to use a range of teaching approaches to encourage pupils of all abilities to think things through for themselves and participate actively in their learning. Recent investment in electronic whiteboards for each classroom has led to effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) in several subjects. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, screen graphics stimulated a very productive brainstorming on symbolism. Regular marking of pupils' work and the setting of targets encourage pupils and students to evaluate their own progress and to identify how to improve further. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good. Teachers use teaching assistants effectively to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are supported well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum provision is good. Significant changes have been made to the curriculum since the last inspection. In Years 10 and 11 a flexible mix of subjects and courses is well matched to pupils' interests and aptitudes, including those with learning difficulties and those aiming to go on to higher education. Their skills in literacy, numeracy and information technology are well developed. The school promotes pupils' health and safety effectively through its personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Citizenship is encouraged throughout school life, for example through PSHE, subject teaching, assemblies, and form time. The school operates a highly successful three week work experience programme for all pupils in Year 10. Pupils enjoy the good range of enrichment activities available to them, including sports, dance, music and drama, and the widened programme of trips made possible by technology status. The sixth form curriculum is also good. Year 11 pupils whose achievements are below the threshold for sixth form entry are not excluded from progressing. They are provided with a successful one year bridging course in a choice of vocational subjects or a foundation course in English, maths and ICT. The curriculum is effectively enhanced with subject related activities such as theatre trips and visiting speakers. Students also benefit from undertaking voluntary work in the community and participating in such events as 'Faith Week' and 'Make Poverty History'. Gaining of technology status has resulted in significant improvements to the physical environment of the school, including an ICT access centre and provision of electronic whiteboards and Internet

broadband access in every teaching room. These are already having a positive impact on the teaching and learning. The school has also established good links with local schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The school provides a very caring and supportive environment where pupils can flourish as confident individuals. Mentoring arrangements for pupils by older pupils are also good. Teachers know the pupils well and work hard to provide a good level of care and support. Challenging targets help pupils improve their performance. Pupils are confident that they can turn to adults in school who will listen to them sympathetically and help them if they have problems. The provision for health, safety and well-being is good. Child protection procedures are securely in place and all staff are aware of their responsibilities. The provision for pupils who have learning difficulties is satisfactory, with good levels of support both in school and through the school's good links with outside agencies. Support for gifted and talented pupils is good; their needs are well understood and catered for. Careers guidance is generally good. The school has recognised a gap in support for students who are not progressing to the sixth form or higher education and has provided additional support in order to rectify this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. The school and headteacher have a clear vision for the school which is shared and supported by the staff and the governing body. The school promotes effectively both academic success and personal development. Pupils achieve well. The school places high value on the support and care of all pupils in a Christian and caring community. The headteacher provides strong and supportive leadership of the school and the senior management team have clear roles matching their experience and expertise. Managers are accountable for achievements and progress in their areas. Communication within the school is good and staff are well informed. Effective action has been taken to bring about improvements in the areas highlighted in the last inspection. The curriculum has been broadened and the physical environment of the school has undergone significant improvements. There are good partnerships with key agencies and local schools. Overall, the school has accurately identified the key priorities for further improvement through its school development plan and self-evaluation report. Departmental self-evaluation is built on effectively to arrive at a whole school evaluation. However, self-evaluation does not yet take full account of the central role of teaching and learning, nor are parents' and pupils' views sufficiently considered. Performance monitoring is systematic and has led to improvements in achievements in many areas. Lesson observation is linked effectively to staff training and development. Managers are aware of many of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning but need to refine and add to their information to secure further improvements and increase the proportion of good

or outstanding teaching. Governance is good. Governors are well informed and share and promote the ethos of the school. They have good links with individual departments and review effectively the progress of the school in key areas.

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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	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
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	3	

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	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
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	1	
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?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	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

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

Earlier this week a small team of inspectors visited your school. We met and talked with many of you and sat in and watched your lessons. We also met with your teachers and had letters from your parents. This letter is to tell you about our findings and explain what we think the school does well and how it could be even better. The school offers you a good quality of education with some aspects that are outstanding. One of the greatest strengths of the school is you. Your behaviour was exemplary. When we spoke to you we were impressed by your maturity and the confident way you expressed your views. You are rightly proud of your school and when we met in groups you praised the way your teachers care for you and offer you support and guidance in your work and your life. The school helps you to develop and grow into well-rounded adults. You enjoy learning and your examination and test results are good. Your school is well managed and your teachers teach you well. One of the ways in which your school can improve further is to make sure that you are all interested and active in all your lessons. We also think that even more of you are capable of achieving the highest grades in your examinations. We have asked the school to make sure that your views and your parents' views are always asked for and fully considered. You can help in this by continuing to show the maturity and thoughtfulness that we noticed whilst we were at your school. I wish you well for the future and hope you are successful in whatever you want to do.