



Saint Aidan's Church of England Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119789
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280659
Inspection dates 28 June 2006 to 29 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr John Ashton

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Cartgate
School category	Voluntary aided		Preesall
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01253 810504
Number on roll	826	Fax number	01253 810244
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Ian Taylor
Date of previous inspection	1 October 2000	Headteacher	The Rev'd. Dr. B Alan Leeson

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	28 June 2006 - 29 June 2006	280659

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Aidan's is a mixed, voluntary-aided Church of England Technology College for students aged 11-16. It is a smaller-than-average school and serves a mixed rural and urban community near the Fylde coast, to the north of Blackpool. Very few students are other than White British. Slightly fewer than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but this proportion is increasing. Eligibility for free school meals is well below average. Attainment on entry is higher than average, although this varies a little from year-to-year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an effective school which provides a satisfactory education overall and has many good features. Students are well taught on the whole. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but improving. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve well and the proportion of students achieving a good GCSE grade in both English and mathematics reflects this. The underachievement of higher attaining students evident in the 2005 national tests for Year 9 in science and English was subsequently tackled well by the school, and the provisional results for 2006 are better. Students' personal development, and the care, support and guidance that promote it, are strengths of the school. Previous weaknesses in monitoring academic progress are being tackled well. The curriculum is satisfactory, but lacks the breadth at Key Stage 4 that students now need. The school makes particularly good use of its long-standing expertise in technology, notably through its excellent links with primary schools. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but have particular strengths, increasingly in the quality of senior and middle leadership and especially in the team-building skills of the headteacher. However, the school's self-evaluation and development planning do not focus well enough on raising students' achievement. The school has satisfactory capacity for improvement, judged, for example, by the progress it has made since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement at Key Stage 3.
- Focus school self-evaluation and improvement planning more sharply on higher achievement.
- Broaden the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to meet the needs of all students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The overall achievement of students is satisfactory. They enter the school with slightly above average attainment and reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 11. Students make better progress at Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) than at Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9). In 2005 the national test results at the end of Year 9 were lower than expected compared to students' previous results. In particular, higher attaining students, both boys and girls, did not convert their high grades at the end of Year 6 into the expected higher grades in Year 9. This was particularly noticeable in English and science. The school followed up this issue vigorously as soon as the results were known, and put measures into place to correct it. Preliminary results from the 2006 tests are not yet available for English but show a definite improvement in both science and mathematics.

At Key Stage 4 the picture is better. Students make good progress and reach above-average standards in most subjects. Of particular note is the high proportion of students who, in 2005, gained at least five A* to C GCSE grades, including both

mathematics and English. This said, not all students made the progress predicted from their Key Stage 3 results. A few students fell well short of their predicted performance. This raises questions about the suitability of the current Key Stage 4 curriculum for the school's increasingly diverse intake.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of students is good. They acquire good spiritual awareness and strong moral and social values. Most behave well and, having recognised that the behaviour of a few students hinders progress in some lessons, the school is setting up firm strategies to improve their attitudes. Attendance is currently satisfactory. Relationships are generally very good; students get on well with each other and with staff. Students say they feel secure and know which adults to approach if necessary. Technology College status enables the school to forge especially effective links with feeder primary schools. An example of this was seen when eleven primary school teams competed, using 'Lego Mindstorms' to achieve fine electronic control of a robot through a complex obstacle course. The improving variety and balance of meals on offer at lunchtime contribute well to students' awareness and adoption of a healthy lifestyle. Health lessons give proper consideration to the social and moral issues associated with the misuse of alcohol and drugs. Their extensive charity work and active support for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme encourage most students to appreciate the needs of others. The very effective school council is another way students make a positive contribution to the school community. Students are prepared well for life after leaving school by good careers advice and work-related enterprise opportunities. Aware of the relatively narrow range of cultures represented in its immediate locality, the school is increasingly providing opportunities for students to appreciate and respect the breadth of cultural and ethnic traditions found in the wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and occasionally outstanding. The school's improved arrangements for teaching and learning have helped to ensure that students in Years 7 to 9 will make faster progress and achieve better in 2006. Most lessons are structured carefully, with a range of activities to interest students and promote effective learning. Some lessons have outstanding features, such as very good questioning that stimulates students to think and express their views. Often, teachers' strong subject knowledge and high expectations for all students to achieve lead to energetic teaching that engages all students in challenging activities and promotes good progress. Students enjoy learning by finding solutions to problems and working independently. Good examples of such activities were seen. Occasionally, teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good, because the pace is slow; explanations are too long, or students are not clear how they should complete tasks.

Some teachers' marking of students' work provides good guidance on how they could improve it. However, the school recognises that this quality is still uneven across subjects and is introducing clear guidance for consistent marking.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets all statutory requirements. All students study a good programme of personal, health and social education, and citizenship. This is enriched by focus days that feature technology and industry and help to prepare students for the world of work. The school has plans to increase the focus on business enterprise. At Key Stage 4, almost all students follow a broad and balanced curriculum of nine full GCSE subjects and a half course in religious education. However, this makes little provision for those students who need a more vocational curriculum. The school plans to include more applied GCSE courses from September, but alternative pathways will still be very limited. The range of extra-curricular opportunities is very good and highly valued by students. It includes many sporting activities, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Young Enterprise, a choir, concert band and homework club. There are also exchange visits to schools in France and Germany.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, support and guidance for its students' personal and academic development. Consequently older students achieve well and the achievement of younger students is improving from satisfactory. Staff are fully committed to students' welfare and work hard to ensure their good personal development. Until recently the school did not have an adequate system to set individual targets and to monitor students' progress. The school is introducing measures to check the effectiveness of the targets it now sets. The more able students have good opportunities to aim higher, for example to develop higher thinking skills on special courses. Students speak highly of the arrangements that help them to settle when they transfer from primary school. The school gives good support to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they maintain good progress. It communicates well with most parents, though some say they would appreciate more information. Child protection requirements and procedures are clear and understood by all staff. Links with outside agencies ensure that students at risk receive necessary support. Health and safety procedures are properly underpinned by risk assessments, so that students can undertake activities safely, both on and off the school premises.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory with good features. The headteacher has maintained good leadership over many years. His clear vision for inclusive and caring education within a Christian framework has established the school's strong ethos and

very good relationships. He is well supported by an able senior leadership team, which, despite being relatively new, has a shared commitment to continuous improvement. Subject leaders embrace the need to evaluate the work of their departments and to take effective action to improve standards. They are supported well by the senior team, who have produced comprehensive materials for self-review, and linked the outcomes of reviews appropriately to performance management targets. Subject leaders use assessment information to track students' progress and to identify any underachievement in both teaching and learning. However, the rigour of this process is inconsistent across the subjects and there is not yet a whole-school standard based on best practice. Staff training and development are linked to the school's priorities. For example, very successful training in behaviour- management has taken place in school for all staff over the last two years.

The school's self-evaluation report is detailed and, although its gradings are over-generous, it shows that senior managers are aware of the main strengths and weaknesses. The school's development plan lacks detail and is insufficiently focused on raising attainment. Governors are committed and supportive and carry out their responsibilities well. They meet their legal responsibilities in full. Day-to-day management is effective and the school runs smoothly. Financial management, including analysis of spending patterns and forward planning, is good. Staff and resources are well deployed and the school gives value for money. Satisfactory progress has been made with all issues from the last inspection, and the school has the capacity to continue to improve.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	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	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

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To the students of:

Saint Aidan's Church of England Technology College

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Preesall

Poulton-le-Fylde

Lancashire

FY6 0NP

29 June 2006

Dear Students

I want to thank you on behalf of the inspection team for making us so welcome on our visit to your school. Our very special thanks go to those of you who gave up part of your lunchtime to talk to us. Many of you told us good things about the school, including how much you appreciate the school's excellent ICT equipment, the good range of extra-curricular activities it offers, and its good buildings.

Other things we particularly like about your school are:

its warmth, friendliness and welcoming ethos

how well taught you are

how very well looked after you all are at school

the very positive relationships in school

the excellent robotic-challenge days.

Three things we would like your school to do even better are: to raise standards of achievement further in Years 7, 8 and 9; to provide a wider curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11, and to sharpen up the school's development planning.

We wish every one of you well for the future and hope that you will always work as hard and enjoy school as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Ashton

Lead inspector