



St Margaret Ward Catholic School and Arts College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124460
LEA Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number 281730
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Gwendoline Coates HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Little Chell Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Tunstall
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 6LZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 234477
Number on roll	941	Fax number	01782 234483
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Bill Robinson
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mr Chris Smith

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	Inspection number 281730
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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 Margaret Ward Catholic School and Arts College is a popular and oversubscribed 11–18 voluntary aided comprehensive school within the Diocese of Birmingham. It has 960 students of whom 134 are in the sixth form. It is a specialist school for performing arts. There are fewer students from minority ethnic groups than the national average. The proportions of students receiving free school meals and who have learning difficulties and disabilities are lower than the national averages.

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, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to its sixth form.

Although the school judges its overall effectiveness as good, inspectors judge this to be inadequate: achievement and standards of students aged 11 to 16 are satisfactory overall but this is overshadowed by the poor progress of students in the sixth form. This judgement is therefore strongly influenced by the significant underachievement of students in the sixth form.

Despite this, the quality of education in the school as a whole is satisfactory. The school has a strong spiritual and moral ethos and this is reflected clearly, for example, in its charitable work and in the behaviour and attitudes of students and their relationships with staff. Its contribution to the community is outstanding and is enhanced by the school's specialist status in the performing arts. It is also involved in effective collaborations with other schools and colleges in the local area, which benefit students by providing greater opportunities and a wider choice of curriculum. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Despite a failure to secure improvements in the sixth form the school has the capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 4

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are inadequate. Students' achievement is too low, given their starting points. Around half the students each year fail to gain the grades of which they are capable; they leave with average standards when they should be above average. The school uses Advanced Level Information System (ALIS) data to analyse students' progress. These data show that performance was significantly below what could be expected from 2003 to 2005. There was an improvement in performance in 2004, but the progress made by students was still too low. In 2005 the school was ranked among the worst in the country when students' progress was compared with students in other schools that use ALIS data. Reasons for the widespread underachievement include students' poor attendance, especially in Year 13, and their weak independent learning skills. There is insufficient space in which the students can work quietly on private study and access to computers is totally inadequate for their needs.

What the school should do to improve further

The school should seek to reverse the significant underachievement in the sixth form by:

- continuing the improvements to leadership and management that have been

introduced • using data more effectively in order to understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and to identify priorities for action • improving the students' attendance • planning work that is better matched to the students' capabilities and ensuring that marking and assessment strategies support and direct students' progress • developing students' independent learning skills and ensuring that resources are adequate to support this. The school should ensure compliance with all statutory requirements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

Standards achieved by students aged 11 to 16 are above average and they are broadly average in the sixth form. Students aged 11 to 16 make satisfactory progress but data provided by the school shows that progress of students in the sixth form is too low. Students joining the school have above average attainment. They make steady progress from ages 11 to 14, although in 2005 there was a slight fall in standards at the end of Year 9. Students aged 14 to 16 also make steady progress and examination results at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average.

Students make good progress in art and design and history throughout the school. Progress in mathematics, particularly during Key Stage 3, has been weaker than in English and science. The school has recognised this and recently put into place appropriate measures to improve performance. There is no pattern of underachievement amongst any particular group of students except for those in the sixth form. The relatively high proportion of students that attain five or more GCSE grades A*–G reflects the school's inclusive nature.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development of students is satisfactory overall; it is good in Years 7 to 11. Whilst there is much to commend the school on its work in this area, the capacity of students in the sixth form for independent learning is unsatisfactory and their attendance is poor.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students learn effectively about their own and others' cultures. Students behave well and learn to respect one another. They take an active role in keeping healthy. The physical education curriculum and large take up of out of school clubs help students exercise regularly and participate in sport. The school has recently introduced healthier lunches and bottled water for students to encourage them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Involvement in such bodies as the student council helps them to take on additional responsibilities.

The strong spiritual and moral ethos in the school extends into the wider community. Of particular note, is the way students raise large sums of money for a wide range of charities, such as the Asian Tsunami appeal. This enables them to contribute to the well-being of others and so develop their economic awareness. Students' contribution

to the community is outstanding, having been enhanced by the school's specialist status in performing arts.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors observed a small sample of lessons jointly with senior managers of the school and found that their judgements of those lessons were accurate. More generally, however, the school judges teaching to be good, but inspectors judge it to be satisfactory because the overall progress that students make is satisfactory.

Teachers get on well with their students. Students do as they are asked in lessons and pay attention when the teacher is speaking. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons that students enjoy. Overall, there is a good variety in the learning activities students experience across their subjects. Students in the sixth form appreciate the help and the time that teachers give them in lessons. Whilst the work is generally at a suitable level of difficulty, there is a weakness in making sure it is just right for all students. Sometimes the same task is used for all students, regardless of how easy or difficult they will find it.

The school is at an early stage of ensuring that all students are clear about what they can achieve. The guidance they get from teachers, in terms of marking of work and written advice, is satisfactory in the main school, but not good enough in the sixth form. Teachers expect students to do too much for themselves, when they know the students lack the skills required for independent study. When tests are carried out, for example, teachers do not always check that students have corrected their work or even noted the correct answers; students' files do not always provide an adequate basis for revision.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Students in Years 7 to 11 have access to a good range of subjects. Performing arts, such as drama and music, have a high profile, reflecting the school's specialist status. The curriculum is broadened by good links with other schools and outside agencies. There are appropriate personal and citizenship lessons, and an extremely good range of activities out of school hours.

Students in Years 10 and 11 can choose a theme, or 'Pathway', for their learning, such as mainly academic subjects or those linked more closely to work and college opportunities. Alternatively, students can choose a mixture of the subjects they prefer, such as art and design, history or geography, alongside the basic compulsory subjects.

However, against statutory requirements, information and communication technology (ICT) is not taught sufficiently to all pupils in Years 10 and 11. In Years 12 and 13, few

vocational choices are available to students, and there is too little choice for less able students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

This provision is satisfactory overall; it is good in Years 7 to 11. The school is very caring, with a warm and friendly ethos among staff and students. Members of staff are fully committed to students' personal welfare. They know the students well, and give them good support in their personal development. Good support is provided to students who have personal difficulties. The measures for keeping students safe are good, and students are encouraged to behave well and to be respectful.

However, academic guidance and support are lacking in the sixth form. The school has not been successful in raising attendance in the sixth form and the students have insufficient opportunities to develop their personal learning skills through private study. They often lack clear guidance on how to organise and improve their work in order to meet their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The headteacher encourages a strong spiritual and moral ethos to which all staff and students are committed. He provides a clear direction for the school, setting appropriate targets, for example in relation to performance at GCSE, which the school has achieved. However, progress in the sixth form is not good enough nor has it been for some time and the school has not acted on this with sufficient urgency to bring about much needed improvement. In light of this, leadership and management are judged as inadequate; the school does, however, have the capacity to improve.

The school's self-evaluation, although a clear reflection of many of the school's strengths and weaknesses, is not a rigorous or accurate assessment of the school's overall performance, when taking into account the sixth form. In reaching their conclusions about the quality of teaching, senior managers do not take sufficient account of students' progress, particularly those in the sixth form. The school does not evaluate its examination data thoroughly enough to understand fully its strengths and weaknesses and it has been slow to act when it has identified issues requiring improvement.

There are strengths in subject leadership and systems are in place to share good practice.

Governors are actively involved in the decision making of the school and are aware of the issues it faces. They do not, however, ensure full compliance with all legal requirements; for example, ICT is not taught sufficiently to all pupils in Years 10 and 11.

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	4
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	4	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	4
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	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	4	4
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	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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	4

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	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	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	3	
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

St Margaret Ward Catholic School and Arts College Little Chell Lane Tunstall Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire ST6 6LZ

25 November 2005

Dear Students

Thank you for your help when we recently visited your school. We would like to explain our findings and tell you what the school needs to do next to improve further. In a year's time, your school will have another inspection because, although it has many good points, students in the sixth form could achieve much better results than they do at present.

There are a number of reasons why sixth form students are not gaining the examination grades that they should. Their attendance is too low and this has a bad effect on their performance. They are not studying on their own effectively enough. There is too little space in which they can work without being disturbed and they do not have enough computers to use. Finally, they need more help on how to organise and improve their work in order to meet their targets. The school is being asked to improve all of these issues and ensure that sixth form students are doing as well as they are able.

Despite these problems, there are many strengths in the school as a whole and you are doing fine in Years 7 to 11. Your school is very caring and has a warm and friendly atmosphere. You behave well and show respect for each other and for your teachers.

Your teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons that you enjoy. Many of you mentioned the good variety of learning activities in your lessons. The very good links with other schools and colleges provide students in Years 10 to 13 with more choice and greater opportunities.

Many of you join the wide range of clubs that are available after school, which help you develop skills and enjoy yourself. By participating in sport you are able to exercise regularly and your school is encouraging you to be healthy by introducing healthier lunches and bottled water. The student council helps you to have a say in the decisions that the school makes. The large sums of money that you raise for a wide range of charities are really impressive and are an indication of the very strong moral and spiritual ethos that your headteacher tries to encourage in the school. As well as this, your school's specialist status in the performing arts allows many of you to contribute very well to your community.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates HMI Lead inspector