



St Paul's Catholic College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125311
LEA Surrey LEA
Inspection number 281933
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Hinchliffe

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	The Ridings
School category	Voluntary aided		Green Street
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Sunbury-on-Thames TW16 6NX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01932 783811
Number on roll	997	Fax number	01932 786485
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Joseph Carvill
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr Simon Uttley

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	Inspection number 281933
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Paul's is an 11-18 Catholic secondary school situated in the borough of Spelthorne. The school is of average size with around 1,000 students, of whom 128 are in the sixth form. Students come to the school from a wide range of both relatively prosperous and less affluent areas in the north of Surrey and West London; overall, their prior attainment is above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is around average. Almost a third of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has held specialist status in technology since 1996.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school judges its effectiveness to be inadequate, due to students' poor performance in recent years, and inspectors agree. School leaders recognise that the college has been in decline for several years, and that serious shortcomings persist, particularly in respect of students' achievements, the curriculum, and the sixth form. Since the appointment of a new headteacher last September, the leadership team has taken decisive action to improve the fortunes of the school, and these are already beginning to have an effect. A focus on improving teaching is starting to have an impact in the classroom, and most teaching is now satisfactory. Behaviour has improved and is now good in most lessons, although there remains a stubborn minority of students whose attitude to learning is negative. Students are well cared for. Plans to re-design the curriculum are well advanced and will offer more options to students, and are expected to fulfil the school's statutory obligations, by the next academic year. Fresh impetus is being given to making more use of the school's specialist status in technology, and this is beginning to pay dividends.

Many students and teachers and parents speak very positively about the changes seen in the school in the last six months. The foundations of sustained improvement are clearly in place. Nevertheless, as the school recognises, some aspects of the school's work are inadequate, and there has been insufficient time since the establishment of the current leadership team to raise standards to a satisfactory level. As a result, the school does not currently provide satisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) 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 the progress that students make and the standards they achieve, particularly in the case of boys and the more able students, and the quality of provision in the sixth form.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 4

Students enjoy most aspects of the sixth form, but they make insufficient progress in comparison with their starting points. Recently there has been a sharp decline in the numbers staying on into the sixth form, although the school expects this to be reversed next year. The curriculum is satisfactory for students who wish to pursue academic advanced level (A-level) courses, but there are insufficient vocational alternatives; the curriculum is to be broadened in the next academic year. Although students are well cared for, support for their academic progress is weak. Attendance at lessons is too low. Teaching is satisfactory, but there is insufficient urgency about the amount of work students do both inside and outside the classroom. Leaders and managers recognise students' underachievement in the sixth form, but have struggled to identify both the causes of poor performance and the remedies. Currently, the sixth form does not provide satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement throughout the school by raising the expectations and aspirations of all students, particularly the most able and boys.
- Ensure that the initiatives in place to improve teaching, learning and assessment are consistently applied in all lessons.
- Implement plans to improve the curriculum so that all statutory obligations are met and a wider range of options are available for students aged 14 to 19.
- Improve the quality of all aspects of sixth form provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The school recognises that the standards students attain and the progress they make are inadequate. Although students enter the school with prior attainment that is above average, by the end of Year 11 they achieve general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results that are below average. Students make insufficient progress in their first three years of school, although there has recently been a slight improvement in the results of national tests taken at the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 11, in 2005 less than half the students achieved 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, which is significantly lower than average and well below the school's own target. Boys made particularly poor progress, with only a third achieving five high grades. The proportion of students who achieved grades A* or A was particularly low. Students of minority ethnic heritage do slightly better than others. Throughout their time at school, students make slow progress in both mathematics and English, although progress in science is better. The very good GCSE results in art and design, and to a lesser extent in drama, show what students are capable of; however, in too many subjects students underachieve. Insufficient emphasis has been given in the past to the importance of high standards in examinations, although this is now being rectified.

In the sixth form, although pass rates are high on A-level courses, too many students fail to finish their courses, and many of those who do take the examinations do not achieve the grades of which they are capable. In 2005, pass rates on advanced subsidiary (AS-level) courses were low, with too many students failing in several subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Students' spiritual and moral development are strongly promoted through the school's Catholic ethos. Students are encouraged to reflect on and develop their beliefs through whole school and class assemblies. The school has a clear and effective policy to deal with any incidents of bullying or racial harassment, and the introduction of peer mentors has been valuable in supporting younger students. Students now feel confident that if they have problems there is someone who they can approach who will help. Most students say that they enjoy school, and many of their lessons. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is satisfactory overall, and students and teachers say it has

improved considerably over the last six months. However, in some lessons a minority of students still hinder their own and others' learning through their immature behaviour, and some parents still express concerns about behaviour in the school. Attendance is satisfactory in Years 7 to 10, but is too low in Year 11 and in the sixth form. Students welcome the opportunity they have to contribute to decision-making through year councils and the student council, and their views are increasingly being taken into account. Students' and parents' views have been well-used in planning changes to the catering provision to encourage healthier eating. Students are reasonably well-prepared for their futures through work experience and other work-related learning opportunities, although there is little vocational education. The school recognises that personal and social development are hampered by the lack of an adequate citizenship curriculum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school recognises that the quality of teaching is variable, and judges that overall it is satisfactory; inspectors agree. A whole school policy that outlines the key features of effective teaching and learning has been developed and is being implemented well in some lessons. In the best lessons, much thought is given to providing a range of tasks and activities that ensures that all students learn quickly. Where teachers have high expectations, set challenging and interesting work, and involve all students in the lesson, students respond well. However, most teaching is satisfactory. Insufficient emphasis is placed on making students think for themselves, providing activities that help students of different abilities to learn quickly, and using assessment as a tool for planning what students need to do to move on to the next stage. A minority of teaching is less than satisfactory, but inspection evidence shows that where this is the case effective action is being taken by school leaders to address the causes of poor performance. The school recognises that there is much to do to ensure consistency in both the setting and the marking of homework. In the sixth form, although the teaching is satisfactory, much of it is insufficiently demanding and students make slower progress than they should. Sixth form students are rightly concerned that a minority of their lessons start late or finish early, and that when teachers are absent adequate work is not always set for them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The school judges the curriculum to be inadequate, and inspectors agree. The school recognises that more needs to be done to provide greater challenge to more able students at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, the school does not fulfil its obligations to provide a coherent programme of citizenship or personal, social and health education (PSHE), and too many students do not have good opportunities to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Clear plans are being

implemented to remedy these deficiencies in the next academic year. A good range of academic options is available at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, but opportunities for students who wish to progress through vocational routes are very limited. A strategy to provide a fuller and more coherent curriculum for students aged 14 to 19 is being developed in collaboration with other schools and colleges. As the school recognises, opportunities for students to participate in enrichment activities that help them to develop and prepare them for adult life are limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The care, guidance and support provided to students are satisfactory in the school overall, but inadequate in the sixth form. Child protection procedures are firmly in place, and all staff receiving regular training. Risk assessments are carried out wherever appropriate. Students with learning difficulties are well supported in class. These students and their parents are involved in setting clear targets, and progress towards their goals is carefully monitored. Students in Years 7 to 9 with weak reading skills receive specific additional teaching. Support for those experiencing other difficulties affecting their learning is good. The student support team, learning mentors and a full-time counsellor work with individual students and their parents to help them overcome any barriers to learning. A small number of students have been helped to undertake vocational courses more suited to their ambitions and aptitudes. Systems to record students' academic achievement and their personal development are improving. Information on students' progress is often used well to support their learning, but this is not yet consistent across the school. Where such information is used effectively, students fully understand their targets and how to improve. Although pastoral support for sixth form students is satisfactory, not enough emphasis is put on monitoring and improving their academic progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher communicates a clear and ambitious vision for school improvement and has raised staff and student morale significantly since he took up his post in September 2005. He rapidly developed an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and this is shared by all staff. Over the past term teaching has improved. This is due to a well planned professional development programme and to the more active role taken by senior managers in supporting and monitoring teaching and learning. Students' attitudes to learning have also improved. Leaders and managers know that they need to increase the proportion of good teaching and to extend the range of teaching and learning styles. Over the last term, initiatives to raise standards have been further enhanced by the creation of an effective senior

leadership team. The roles and responsibilities of all managers in the school are clearly demarcated. Resources are being deployed appropriately to support improvement.

A good platform has been established to raise standards. However, whilst the school's capacity to improve has developed well over the past term, there has not yet been sufficient time for the measures taken by managers to have a positive impact on all aspects of the school's work. A number of crucial senior appointments, including the heads of mathematics and English, do not take up their posts until next term. The leadership and management of the sixth form are inadequate because actions to improve provision are yet to have an impact. The governance of the school is satisfactory; the governing body now has a clear understanding of the issues faced by the school, and is taking appropriate steps to support the headteacher in bringing about the necessary improvements.

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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?	4	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
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?	4	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	

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	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
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	3	

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?	4	4
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?	3	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	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	4	4
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

Students

As you know, we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking to many of you in meetings, in lessons, and around the school. You were friendly and polite. We also talked to a lot of teachers and school managers, observed lessons, and read the questionnaires that many of your parents filled in.

Many of you told us that the school was much better than it used to be, and that since Mr Uttley arrived last September lots of new things have been put in place to try to improve things in the school. We agree with you. We think that the school is on an upward path, although it is early days. You are well cared for at school. Most teachers are making a real effort to ensure that you learn more in lessons. You told us that behaviour around the school has improved - again, we agree with you. Although a few of you have a negative attitude towards school, or find it hard to concentrate, most of you are keen to learn, and behave well.

Despite these improvements, there is still a long way to go. Last year, GCSE results (particularly for the boys!) were very disappointing, and in the sixth form too many students did not achieve as well as they should have. Even in Year 9, the SATs results should be better. Although the teaching is improving, there are still too many lessons where you are not pushed enough to learn quickly and think for yourselves. So, inspectors will come back to your school in a year's time to check that all the things that Mr Uttley and his colleagues are doing are having a real impact on raising your expectations and your achievement. You can help by working really hard and concentrating in all lessons. We hope that, with your help, the school fulfils its promise to become a really good school.

Your sincerely,

Alan Hinchliffe HMI

Lead Inspector