



All Hallows Catholic High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111458
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 285456
Inspection dates 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Brian Padgett HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	1617	Fax number	01625 500315
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev Peter Burke
Date of previous inspection	29 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr Paul Heitzman

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	7 June 2006 - 8 June 2006	285456

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school was inspected in September 2005 when it was judged to require special measures. The headteacher resigned at the end of October 2005 and an acting headteacher was seconded to the school at the beginning of November. A new headteacher has been appointed to take up the post from September 2006. The school had its first monitoring visit by HMI in March 2006. This report is a result of the second monitoring visit.

The school is a member of the Catholic Schools Partnership in Cheshire, serving the Diocese of Shrewsbury. It is a little larger than most secondary schools with an average sized sixth form. Although it draws its pupils mainly from Macclesfield and the surrounding district, the school attracts pupils and students from a wide geographical area. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage and come from advantaged social backgrounds. There are relatively few pupils with learning difficulties, disabilities or statements of special educational need.

An extensive building and refurbishment programme is nearing completion, replacing approximately a third of the existing classrooms and facilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. It has made rapid progress in dealing with those aspects of its work that were the cause of special measures, notably in leadership and management at all levels. There have been substantial improvements in the school's ethos and the morale of teachers as a result of improved leadership and management. There is a real enthusiasm and momentum for change and a growing confidence. The care, guidance and support the school provides for its pupils have improved and so have pupils' personal development and well-being.

Standards are high and have been for some years. However, high standards only represent satisfactory achievement for these pupils, since many are very capable and they enter the school at 11 years with standards that are well above average. There is a considerable amount of work yet to do to raise the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise pupils' achievement beyond satisfactory. As yet, improvements have only begun to impact in what goes on in the classroom. The satisfactory judgements for teaching and learning and for leadership and management reflect that the improvements have only just started to take effect. Staff recognise the extent of the task ahead of them and their commitment to improve further is considerable.

The acting headteacher, the senior leadership team and the governors have an accurate and realistic view of what has been achieved and what has yet to be accomplished. Their judgements corresponded closely to those of the inspection team, including in the areas for further development. The whole school community recognises the very significant contribution to improvement made by the acting headteacher. Working together under his guidance, and supported by the local authority, the governors, senior leadership team and the middle managers have built good capacity for improvement. This is well illustrated in the painstaking way in which the appointment of the new headteacher has been undertaken, in a manner aimed at securing a smooth and seamless transition that protects and strengthens the progress the school has made.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school believes, and the inspection team agrees, that the sixth form is the most effective part of the school. This was the case when the school was inspected in 2005 and remains so now. Standards and achievement are high, although there is some variation between the performance of students in different subjects. Students' personal development is very good and the provision is well managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning by: matching pupils' work more closely to their levels of knowledge, understanding and skills; involving pupils more in lessons and

in evaluating their learning; and, making better use of the results of assessments and targets in planning lessons.

- Monitor teaching and learning more rigorously to ensure improvements are consistent across all departments.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They enter school with well above average standards from their primary schools. Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 3, and pupils go on to attain good results in GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4. There are fluctuations from year to year, but high standards are a consistent feature of the school's performance. In 2005, Key Stage 3 results were higher than usual, and represented good progress even when taking pupils' high starting points into account. However, progress in Key Stage 4 is slower so that overall achievement between 11 and 16 years is only satisfactory. Students generally achieve well in the sixth form, although there is variation between one subject and another.

Pupils are currently on course to reach their targets at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE, representing satisfactory overall progress since Key Stage 2. All groups do broadly as well as each other. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive appropriate support, and the progress of pupils who are at risk of underachievement for one reason or another is carefully monitored. However, the school is only just getting to grips with the progress of the most able pupils, of whom there are relatively many. They are generally taught in classes where children of all abilities are present, and since they rarely receive work that is substantially more challenging from that for the majority, they make less progress than they might. However, their progress is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils and students are good; an improvement on the situation less than a year ago, at the time of the last inspection. Then, and subsequently, pupils have shown loyalty to and appreciation of the school, insisting that they feel safe and enjoy school. Pupils continue to show good attitudes to learning. They behave well in lessons, although to some extent, this depends upon the quality of teaching they receive. Pupils agree that the school has got better since it went into special measures. The number of exclusions has fallen. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved because of the increased opportunities they have to exercise responsibility and the wider range of opportunities for cultural development. Pupils insist there is very little bullying at the school. Nevertheless, they believe the increased presence of senior staff around the school has improved behaviour on corridors and outside. They adhere more closely to the school's uniform code.

Pupils are developing into articulate and perceptive young people with clear and forthright views. They make a significant contribution to the school's improvement through the school council. Sixth formers are particularly impressive in this respect. Pupils' social development is satisfactory. There are ample opportunities to develop their social skills, but these are not well developed in lessons when all that is required of them is that they should be passive learners. Sport is a strong feature of the school and through physical activity, pupils are developing healthy lifestyles. However, extending their knowledge and understanding of healthy eating, so that they make healthy choices in what they eat, is at an early stage. Pupils are increasingly well prepared for future economic well-being. Improvements in the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) and increased opportunities to undertake vocational courses ensure this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall, but this is the area where improvement is now most needed. The school acknowledges this and is working strenuously to improve the provision. It is also the main focus for the new headteacher. There is little unsatisfactory teaching. However, there was less teaching of good quality seen during this inspection than at the time of the first monitoring visit. This supports the inspectors' view that consistently good practice is not yet embedded. Many aspects of good teaching - good relationships between teachers and pupils, teachers' good subject knowledge, and good behaviour management - are already firmly in place. Yet there remains much to be done. A coordinated effort to improve teaching and learning has not taken place for several years and the school has lost touch with what is the best practice. This issue is now being dealt with. The aspects identified for improvement are those that senior leaders have identified for themselves. They are as follows: for teachers to match pupils' work more closely to their needs to ensure that in each lesson there is the right degree of challenge for groups of pupils at different levels of understanding and knowledge; to make better use of the considerable amount of data available to teachers about pupils' performance and their targets in the planning of lessons, and in marking pupils' work; and, to involve pupils actively in lessons. In respect of this last point, in too many lessons, pupils sat passively for too long, because teachers talked at them and missed opportunities to involve them.

All staff are currently engaged in a professional debate about effective teaching and learning. They are at the stage of drawing their findings together to provide a coherent approach across all subjects and in each year group, including for the most able pupils. In doing this, they have been well supported by the local authority.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The school provides a suitable range of subjects and courses at each key stage, and a rich programme of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport and music. There are important developments underway to enhance the curriculum, although they have not yet come to fruition. The weakest subject, ICT, is now improving. The imminent move to the new building is an important part of the plan to integrate the use of ICT into other subjects, as the building has been designed to facilitate this. The number of vocational options and the collaboration with the local college is broadening the range of courses available to students. A drive to improve the provision for gifted and talented pupils is underway that is intended to affect the curriculum they experience as well as the way they are taught. Comprehensive departmental reviews have taken place and action plans for improvement in each subject drawn up. These include departments working together to explore cross-curricular links intended to engage pupils more and improve outcomes. Governors and senior management, including the new headteacher, have decided to apply for the school to become a Business and Enterprise College. Although at an early stage, a small team is working to prepare a bid for March 2007. This decision will affect the curriculum of the school in the future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. This judgement is in line with the school's view and is an improvement since the last inspection. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good with appropriate and robust arrangements for child protection. There have been many improvements to this aspect of the school's work. Systems for behaviour management are more effective and, although bullying is not seen as an issue by pupils, anti-bullying initiatives are being implemented by staff. Information about pupils' progress is used well by senior staff and heads of year to track the progress of individual pupils, especially those at risk of underachievement. More recently, increasing attention is also being given to tracking and encouraging the progress of higher attaining pupils. The school is aware that pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in evaluating their own learning, although some action has already been taken to develop this aspect of assessment. A start has been made on improving procedures to monitor attendance more rigorously, an issue identified during the last monitoring visit.

At the time of the last inspection this was an insular school. It is now an outward looking school actively developing partnerships with other primary and secondary schools and the local college. It is much more in tune with what parents and pupils think and it responds effectively to their concerns.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are satisfactory. This judgement reflects the current impact they have on improving the provision for pupils, particularly the teaching and learning. However, although the full impact of the changes is yet to be seen, much effective groundwork has been established at all levels of leadership and management. Particular credit is due to the acting headteacher who has shown the staff, governors, parents and pupils what effective leadership can achieve. He has acted as a powerful enabler for others. Senior staff have a realistic and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

All levels of management are empowered. The senior leadership team is strong, unified and committed to improvement. Their most obvious success to date is in securing the adoption of development targets for all pupils, but there have been comprehensive improvements in the management of pupils' behaviour, assessment, and professional development. The team is working closely with the new headteacher to ensure the current momentum for change is sustained.

Middle management is significantly better placed to tackle the inconsistencies in pupils' performance within subjects and between different cohorts. For example, subject departments are developing cross-curricular links, and heads of years are following up on pupils' academic progress as well as fulfilling their pastoral role.

The governing body has made radical changes to the way it operates. It has made rapid progress since the last inspection. It now provides full support and challenge to the school's senior leadership. Governors' knowledge of the school is enhanced by strong departmental links and it has developed the necessary independence to be able to hold the leadership to account for the school's performance.

The leadership and management are much more outward looking than before and the school is back within the mainstream of the town's educational development. It has built good capacity for, and is in a strong position to effect improvement. The school provides sound value for money.

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

As you know, inspectors were in school recently for a second time this year to evaluate the progress the school has made since it was placed in special measures in September 2005. I write to inform the school council of the findings of the inspection.

Firstly, I would like to thank the school council for its contribution to the inspection. The cogent and articulate way you presented your views and the strength of your arguments made a considerable impression on the inspection team. You influenced our judgements about the nature and extent of the personal development of pupils and students at the school for the good.

We decided that the school no longer requires special measures and we shall no longer monitor the progress of the school differently from that of any other. The school was placed in special measures because of weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school and these have now been resolved. The school has changed for the better. You will have noticed some of the improvements, such as the target system, the increased supervision of staff that makes the corridors and grounds safer places for pupils, and the higher expectations about standards of behaviour and of adherence to the uniform. You may have noticed how much more the school's leaders actively seek out what you and parents think about the school and act on your views. However, many of the improvements will not be visible to you, although they are just as important. We believe the school's governors and leadership and management have done all the background work to catch up for past failings and are well prepared now to go on to raise your levels of achievement.

There is much to be done, and improvements must make an impact in your lessons. We have focused our recommendations on making teaching and learning more effective. Pupils should notice the following differences:

- work should be matched better to the different levels of understanding of pupils in each class, so they can expect to be given work that is at the right level of challenge for them
- lessons should involve them more. Too many lessons at present consist of teachers talking at pupils for too long. Pupils become bored when they are passive for long stretches of time. We have asked teachers to involve you more in discussions, debate and in varied activities
- teachers should be making better use of all the information they have about your learning to plan lessons and assess your progress with you to make sure you are achieving your best. Pupils should notice an improvement in marking, for instance.

Standards at All Hallows have always been high. Frankly, they have been no higher than expected given the number of bright pupils and students in the school. The school is now ready to really help you to achieve your best. However, it is all to prove and that is where the pupils can play their part. As one of your members pointed out, if pupils don't try hard enough, it isn't the teachers' fault they don't achieve well. We believe the teachers are willing to put in whatever effort is required and we hope pupils will respond appropriately. In fairness, we must point out that achievement in the sixth form is already good, and the sixth form has not been a significant focus of our monitoring activities.

The school faces an exciting future. The new building provides a much better place to learn than many of the existing classrooms and you will have a new headteacher - whom you helped appoint - starting in September. We hope the removal of special measures is just the sort of tonic the school needs to feel it is on its way to a very bright future.