

# Our Lady's RC Sports College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105576
<b>Local Authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	287271
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jim Kidd

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	745
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Lamb
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Teresa Dervin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 April 2002
<b>School address</b>	Alworth Road Higher Blackley Manchester Lancashire M9 0RP
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 7950711
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 2205929

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average college lies on the outskirts of Manchester and serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is more than three times the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage but there is an increasing number entering the college with English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Our Lady's has been a specialist sports college since September 2003 and is now working towards Healthy School status. It has been identified for an extensive rebuild under the Manchester Building Schools for the Future programme.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Our Lady's is a rapidly improving college that provides a satisfactory quality of education. Students' personal development is good and the college provides good care, support and guidance for them. After a period of uncertainty, with significant staffing problems, the college is now becoming increasingly popular and has received more first-choice applications for the next academic year than ever before. Sports college status ensures that the local community benefit from a wide range of after-school sports clubs and physical activities. From a low base, standards are improving markedly and 2006 saw the best GCSE results in the history of the college. Attainment remains well below average in mathematics and science but standards in English are close to national expectations at the end of Year 11. Standards are also improving in Key Stage 3 but there was a decline in English last year. Nonetheless, students make satisfactory progress across the school, particularly in relation to their well below average standards on entry to Year 7. Attendance is now much better than in previous years. Although it remains below average, it has improved by nearly six percentage points since the previous inspection because of the impressive work of the attendance officer and other key staff. Students develop well personally in the college and members of the college council work hard to offer opinions as to how the college can be improved further. Students' behaviour is satisfactory and is improving. A minority of parents, and some students themselves, point to the immature conduct of a few, which sometimes has a negative effect on some aspects of the college. Students' development as independent learners is also a key priority for the college. Teaching is satisfactory overall and there are examples of exemplary practice in several subjects. However, in a significant number of lessons teachers direct activities too much and students do not always have to think for themselves. The college places strong emphasis on emotional development and on guidance for all, irrespective of their levels of ability. Parents are very positive about this aspect of the college's work. They comment about how students with little English are, in their words, 'helped to speak, work in a team and communicate effectively' in a short time. This determination by the college to meet the individual needs of its students is further confirmed by the development of the curriculum, which now contains more vocational courses and off-site programmes. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to motivate students and give them opportunities for personal research is underdeveloped. The dedicated leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by her deputy headteacher and leadership team, is instrumental in bringing about the rapid and ongoing improvement in all areas of college life. Professional development of middle leaders needs to take place to ensure they can take more responsibility for raising standards and achievement. Although supportive of the school and now more involved in the college, the governors need to do more to hold the school rigorously to account for its performance. Our Lady's Roman Catholic Sports College is emerging from a difficult period in its history and has good capacity to improve further. It gives satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement at Key Stage 3 in English and at Key Stage 4 in mathematics and science.
- Raise the quality of teaching and ensure that teachers encourage students to develop independent learning skills.
- Develop the capacity of middle managers to take responsibility for improving standards.
- Extend the use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool across the curriculum.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Attainment on entry to the college is well below average. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2006 were well below expectations, particularly in English, but they improved in mathematics and science and have shown a positive upward trend over the last five years. From a low point in 2005, results at GCSE in 2006 improved significantly. Since the previous inspection, results have improved at a faster rate than nationally. This satisfactory and improving progress made by students has come about because of better teaching, a curriculum which is now more relevant to individual needs and the establishment of a comprehensive system to track performance. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in danger of underachieving receive targeted support and the number of students leaving the college without any qualification has dropped significantly.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Students' spiritual, social and cultural development is good and their moral development is outstanding. Students discuss new topics such as crime and sentencing in a very mature fashion. For example, they give persuasive arguments about prejudice and stereotyping and make links between the persecution of minorities in all areas of the world. Students value their own cultural heritage and the rich diversity of other cultures in the world. Attendance is below average, but has risen considerably since the last inspection. Behaviour is satisfactory with a remarkable reduction in exclusions in recent years and the school is a calm and orderly community as a result. Parental and pupil surveys show that most pupils enjoy school life and feel safe and free from bullying. The college council makes an effective contribution to school development and members are looking forward to an 'anti-discrimination day' and are planning an 'anti-bullying day' also. Moreover, the council's recent healthy eating campaign reflects pupils' good attitudes towards developing healthier lifestyles. There is extensive take-up of lunchtime and after school sports activities. Students make a good contribution to the college community and Year 11 'buddies' help Year 7 students settle into college life quickly. The development of skills to ensure students' future economic well-being is satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but there are examples of good and outstanding practice in both key stages. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the increasing numbers with English as an additional language receive focused support and both teachers and teaching assistants treat their pupils with respect and dignity. In the best lessons students take responsibility for their own learning, are fully engaged in the activities and are confident about what they can achieve. In an excellent Year 8 graphics lesson, for example, there was a strong emphasis on increasing students' self-esteem and on thought-provoking practical activities in relation to the drawing of 3D packages. On occasions, however, pace is slow and teachers spend too much time in directing discussions and learning. Levels of challenge suffer as a result and students are not required to justify their answers or think deeply about the subject-matter. Assessment is good and is improving as a result of the

in-service training provided through sports college status. Tracking systems to identify progress and where pupils are experiencing difficulty are well developed. Students are fully aware of their targets but are sometimes less sure of what they need to do to reach them. Marking is satisfactory but is inconsistent in quality.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features. Drama in Key Stage 3 develops students' self-confidence and self-esteem and the Year 6 Summer School aids transition and combats the low levels in basic skills at the start of Year 7. As students say, 'This helped us with our reading and there were no worries for us when we joined the big school.' Provision in Key Stage 4 is enhanced by a range of vocational courses provided through the growing collaboration with local colleges. There is a well-led programme of alternative education activities where students are able to learn skills and gain accreditation through work-related learning.

There is a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities and take-up by students is extensive and monitored closely by staff. Many students enjoy taking part in the wide range of sporting activities, sponsored through specialist sports college status. For example, the Junior Sports Leaders Award is followed by more than half of Key Stage 4 students who say they are better organised and prepared for their examinations because of their experiences in this initiative. Provision for ICT has improved greatly since the last inspection but there are still too few opportunities for pupils to use computers

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, support and guidance are good with some outstanding features. Students feel safe, enjoy college and are supported well. Relationships between teachers and students are very positive. Students' concerns are listened to and acted upon swiftly. They feel that their teachers are approachable and caring. Effective strategies for target setting and checking students' progress are having a major impact on their achievement and self-confidence. Support for vulnerable students is very good. The Focus Centre, for example, caters very well for those at risk of exclusion, ensuring they continue to learn and gain in self-confidence. A range of additional support is secured when needed to meet students' individual needs. Guidance for students about option choices, future careers and opportunities in further education is very effective. The college has the lowest numbers of leavers not in education and employment of any North Manchester high school. Procedures for health and safety, child protection and risk assessments are in place and checks on the suitability of all adults to work in the college meet statutory requirements.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The senior leadership of the school sets clear direction for development. Senior leaders have a clear idea of where the strengths of the college lie and areas where improvement are needed. The role of middle leaders in raising standards is being developed and they are providing satisfactory support, although it is recognised that some are initiating change at a faster rate than others. Departmental self-review

helps to ensure that progress is being made in all areas. The school now has a strong focus on raising achievement and this is seen by the most recent external examination results at Key Stage 4. However, the strategies in place for Key Stage 4 have not impacted fully on Key Stage 3. Performance management procedures are robust and the school monitors teaching and learning accurately and provides appropriate support when required. Governors provide focused support and are beginning to hold the college leadership to account. Specialist status, after a slow start, is now making a positive impact across the whole college and is helping to promote good behaviour, more positive attitudes to education and healthy lifestyles. Staff within the physical education department are leading in-service training on aspects of assessment and they also organise a wide range of sporting activities for the local community.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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	2
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	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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	2
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you all for your warm welcome and for your kindness when we visited your college last week. We enjoyed our time with you, your teachers and teaching assistants and would now like to tell you what we think about the college.

Our Lady's is a satisfactory college, but it is improving rapidly and becoming more popular. Next year, for example, there are already no more places left for students coming into Year 7. Attainment is improving too and in 2006 the college had its best-ever GCSE examination results. Indeed, the work we saw in classrooms confirms that standards are getting higher and higher. Students' behaviour is satisfactory and most work hard in lessons. Members of the college council give their opinions about how to make the school even better and they are keen to make sure that all students are courteous to their peers and to the adults who also work in the college. These adults care for students well and try hard to help them in everything they do. Teaching is satisfactory and there are now more subjects in Years 10 and 11 to help students prepare for the world of work. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are supported well by the leadership team and other members of staff and they know exactly what needs to be done to make Our Lady's an even better college to attend. We have now asked heads of subject departments and your teachers to try hard to improve standards even more, especially in English, mathematics and science and to make sure that boys in particular produce their very best work. We would like them to help you find out more things for yourselves and give you more opportunities to use computers in lessons. You have a very important part to play too: although attendance is improving, we think it is vital for you all to come to college regularly and only to miss college when it is really unavoidable. Thank you once again for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We wish you well for the future.