

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111457
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	288967
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Patrick Geraghty HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1614
6th form	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Wilson
Headteacher	Mr Gus Van Cauwelaert
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002
School address	Highfield Road Widnes Cheshire WA8 7DW
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College was formed by the amalgamation of two comprehensive schools in September 1994. Learners arrive in Year 7 with a full range of attainment but overall, attainment is just below the national average. About 9% of learners are on the special educational needs register. The proportion of those eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The college serves some areas of significant socio-economic deprivation. About 1% of the college's learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2005 the college achieved specialist status as a sports college. The college achieved the full award for Healthy Schools in 2005. The current headteacher was appointed in 2004.

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 now a satisfactory and improving school. From 2002 the college entered a period which was to be characterised by low examination pass rates, declining attendance and an increase in poor behaviour by some students. The curriculum was no longer appropriate for the needs of all learners. Now, effective leadership is being provided by the headteacher to tackle the college's persistent pattern of underachievement. There is strong evidence to demonstrate that improvement strategies are having an impact on achievement and standards. An upward improvement trend was sustained further in 2006/07. The standards of students' work examined by inspectors were at least satisfactory. The college recognises that further improvement is required particularly at Key Stage 3. Achievement and standards in the sixth form are satisfactory.

Students make good progress in their personal development. Students enjoy the college and their behaviour in lessons and around the site is good. Attendance has improved. The specialist sports college status has brought about a strong focus on healthy lifestyles. There are many enrichment activities with cultural and spiritual themes and students have a strong sense of their responsibilities to others.

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. The college recognises that the currently satisfactory teaching needs to become more varied and lively. Students need to have greater involvement in their own learning. The marking of learners' work is not consistently frequent or rigorous enough to help them to improve.

The curriculum is good. A recently introduced pathways curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 is now ensuring wider and more appropriate choices. The curriculum is enriched by enterprise activities with provision for work attachments and programmes aimed at developing skills for later life. Students enjoy and appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Specialist sports college status has provided excellent opportunities for students to follow sports leadership and sports coaching qualifications.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good aspects. Strong pastoral care provided by all the staff is a well-established feature of the college. However, academic guidance is less well developed. While tracking and monitoring of students' progress has improved it is not consistently applied across all areas of the college.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The school has dealt effectively with a number of issues raised in the last inspection report including raising standards in design and technology and increasing the range of vocational opportunities in Years 10, 11 and the sixth form. The headteacher is laying firm foundations for the future and giving the college good capacity to improve further. Senior leaders and middle managers share a strong commitment to continuing college improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The college judges the sixth form to be satisfactory and inspectors agree with this judgement. The sixth form curriculum has become broader and now includes Level 2 and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) Level 3 courses. Enrolment procedures have been tightened. Students do well at General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level but less well at GCE AS level. Progress at GCE A level is good. Guidance and induction procedures are improving but the college acknowledges the need for further improvements in these areas. Students'

progress is tracked with regular feedback. Students praise the good relationships they have with staff and the helpful support they receive. Sixth formers play a very positive mentoring role with Key Stage 3 and 4 students. Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory. Self-evaluation is accurate and the college is aware of where further improvements can be made.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards further, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- Involve students more actively in their own learning.
- Improve the quality of marking so that it consistently informs students of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Apply the tracking and monitoring of students' progress more consistently across all areas of the college.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement and standards are now satisfactory. The majority of learners enter the college in Year 7 having attained standards just below the national average. From 2002 to 2006 there was significant underperformance at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Substantial changes instigated by the new headteacher in 2005 are now having an impact on achievement and standards. In 2006 GCSE pass rates increased to 47% for five or more A* to C grades; this represented improvement for the school. There is strong evidence to demonstrate significant further improvement in 2006/07. A significant number of learners have already achieved grade C or above in mathematics as a result of early entry. Modular results in science and coursework in English also demonstrate strong upward trends. Information and communication technology (ICT) module scores are significantly higher than at the comparable period last year. Pass rates in design technology have improved from 25% in 2004 to 42% in 2006 and indicators suggest a significant further rise in 2006/07. The standard of Year 10 and 11 students' work examined by inspectors was at least satisfactory and much was good. Improvements in core subjects at Key Stage 3 have been less rapid. This year's practice national tests results demonstrate good improvement when compared to previous years. In Key Stage 3 lessons visited, inspectors judged that learners made at least satisfactory progress. The college is now near the national average in standards in English, mathematics and science. However, the college recognises that further improvement is required. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive targeted support and achieve well making similar levels of progress to their peers.

Achievement and standards in the sixth form are satisfactory. Learners make good progress at GCE A level. The college recognises that pass rate at GCE AS level at 80% is below the national average and requires improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Attendance has improved as a result of a rigorous monitoring process supported by firm action to tackle problems. Attendance is now satisfactory and in line with the national average. Students enjoy their time in college and say that they feel safe and secure. Behaviour in lessons and around the college is good and incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. There is an active school council, which is an important focus for the student voice. Recently it has secured improvements to the environment through the refurbishment of the toilets and the provision of benches in the grounds. The specialist sports college status has brought about a strong focus on healthy lifestyles. All students participate in physical education (PE) and a significant majority take advantage of the school's impressive extra-curricular programme for sport. The canteen offers healthy options, which are welcomed by most students. The college's Catholic values underpin the development of spiritual, social and moral understanding. There are many enrichment activities with cultural and spiritual themes and students have a strong sense of their responsibilities to others. Students acquire skills which will contribute to their economic well-being through a strong work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with several good features. Teaching is improving. There are positive relationships between the students and their teachers. Students enjoy and make the greatest progress in lessons where they are engaged by a range of teaching and learning approaches. These lessons are well planned, focused with clear outcomes and conducted at a brisk and challenging pace. For example, in a history lesson students were actively engaged in groups to examine a variety of sources on the 1942 Wannsee conference. High quality resources combined with a brisk pace and excellent planning of group work activities enhanced the learners' enjoyment, involvement and progress. ICT is used confidently to motivate learners. However, consistently good practice has not yet been established across the college. In the weaker lessons pace is slower and questioning is not extensive enough to involve students. These lessons are too teacher focused and students are not pushed to achieve the standards of which they are capable. The sharing of good practice, with a significant contribution by the specialist sports college staff, has improved.

The college's use of assessment information to set targets and monitor how well students are progressing has recently improved and now allows for greater intervention to help those students who are underachieving. The marking of learners' work is not consistently frequent or rigorous enough to help them to improve. Homework is not being used on a regular basis across the college to enhance learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. In Years 7 to 9 it meets statutory requirements and is matched to the needs of all students. For example, students in Year 7 who experience particular difficulties in literacy have additional support in the development of their basic skills. This is impacting positively on their confidence and self-esteem.

A recently introduced pathways curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 is now ensuring wider and more appropriate choices. Students can now access courses that best match their needs and aspirations and this is beginning to have an impact on achievement and standards. The curriculum is enriched by enterprise activities with provision for work attachments and programmes aimed at developing skills for later life.

Students enjoy and appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Specialist sports college status has provided excellent opportunities for students to follow sports leadership and sports coaching qualifications. There is an impressive uptake by older students who are able to use the skills they acquire in the local community. In the lower school over three quarters of students participate in extra-curricular sports activities. Trips, visits, retreats and other enrichment opportunities make a strong contribution to students' enjoyment and enhance positive relationships.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good aspects. Strong pastoral care provided by all the staff is a well-established feature of the college. Good behaviour and respect for others is exhibited by students. There are strong links with outside agencies ensuring that all learners, including those most at risk, are well supported. However, academic guidance is less well developed. While tracking and monitoring of students' progress has improved it is not consistently applied across all areas of the college.

Effective programmes exist at key points in the learners' transition. Work with feeder primary schools ensures that when students move into Year 7 it is a positive experience. There are appropriate guidance programmes for Year 9 and Year 11 students. There are good links with parents. Work experience for older students and a supportive careers education and guidance programme prepares students well to make informed choices about their future.

Arrangements for safeguarding students' welfare and safety are in place and understood by staff. The college's health and safety and risk assessment systems are fully in place and monitored.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The headteacher is providing good and effective leadership in tackling the college's persistent pattern of underachievement so that standards and achievement are improving and are now satisfactory. This trend of improvement is being brought about by a range of initiatives. For example, there is now a more consistent approach to monitoring students' progress, much closer monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum is being developed to meet the needs of all learners. Many of the initiatives are in the early stages of implementation and their impact, although already discernible, will need time to develop fully. The headteacher is laying firm foundations for the future and giving the college good capacity to improve further. Astute appointments have been made to the restructured senior management team. Subject coordinators now have a clear understanding of their role and their importance in raising standards. There is a clear sense of teamwork among all managers in focusing on improving standards and achievement. Thorough procedures for self-evaluation have been introduced to give leaders and managers a clear picture of the college's strengths and weaknesses. This is used to identify the priorities in the school's comprehensive development plan. The management of the sixth form is satisfactory.

Governors are responding eagerly to the headteacher's efforts to involve them more closely in getting to know how the college is doing. They are now carrying out their responsibilities in a satisfactory manner by offering support and, where necessary, challenge to make sure the college continues to improve. The college gives satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
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	3	
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

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?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	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	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, 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	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your college recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our two days at your college. We particularly enjoyed talking to so many of you about your work, interests and how much you enjoy and give to the college.

Your college is now making satisfactory progress and is an improving school. The college is well led. The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard because they want you to do the very best you can.

Most importantly your achievement and examination results are beginning to improve after many years where they have been poor. You enjoy many of your lessons, particularly when you know that you are improving and learning. However, some of you are not reaching the standards that you are capable of. You can play an important part in this by working with your teachers and helping them to improve your work.

There is some good teaching in the college and in these lessons you respond well to the teachers' high expectations and you make good progress. However, this is not the case across all of the college. In some lessons you are not being given work which really stretches you or encourages you to enjoy learning, achieve well and progress.

Your curriculum options have improved so that they now better serve your abilities and offer you a wider range of opportunities for the future. You enjoy a wide range of extra activities. We were particularly impressed with how many of you take part in sports activities. The teachers and support staff care for you and give you satisfactory guidance.

Your college needs to:

- continue to improve examination results and ensure that you make the progress that you are capable of especially in Years 7, 8 and 9
- ensure teaching better meets the needs of all students
- ensure the consistency of marking so that you know how to improve
- consistently monitor and track your progress across all areas of your college to enable you to make better progress.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you well for your future education.