



St Augustine's Catholic High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116997
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 290697
Inspection dates 11 July 2006 to 11 July 2006
Reporting inspector Brian Cartwright 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 inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Stonepits Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Hunt End
Age range of pupils	13 to 19		Redditch, Worcestershire B97 5LX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01527 550400
Number on roll	840	Fax number	01527 550230
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Brian Regan
Date of previous inspection	10 March 2003	Headteacher	Mr Michael Bennett

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

Description of the school

St Augustine's serves the community of Redditch and surrounding towns; about half the students arrive by bus. The majority are from Catholic families although many have other faiths. The attainment of students when they took the national tests in their middle schools in Year 6 was average. There are well below average numbers of students with statements of special educational need (SEN), and low numbers on the SEN register. However, the school does provide well for these students with disabilities or learning difficulties. Almost all students come from a White British heritage. School attendance is high, particularly for an upper school; there are low numbers of exclusions. The overall socio-economic indicators of student backgrounds are quite favourable.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Augustine's Catholic High School's mission is to be a Christ-centred learning community committed to the development of the whole person. It succeeds in this endeavour in every respect. It is a good school through and through. Christ and His teachings underpin the strategy and detailed planning of the school, and shape its responses. Many staff independently emphasised the caring atmosphere of support that helped them teach well, and also the pleasant and hard-working nature of students that helps them achieve well. It is a welcoming and pleasant place to teach, and to learn. Students enjoy learning, and recognise that the school is equipping them very well for their future success. Their attendance is good, their behaviour is consistently good both in and out of lessons, and they are motivated well to learn, thanks to good support from their parents, and the school staff. High expectations of staff and students are shared, so that learners know what is required of them, and what they should achieve. Academic results in 2005 for Year 9 and 11 were well above the national average, as were measures of progress for virtually all groups of learners, in most subjects. This has been the case since 2003, and represents good achievement for all students. Some results were outstanding, for example science in Year 9, information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 11, and business studies in Year 13. Preliminary data for 2006 examinations suggests these high standards are being maintained. Boys make even better progress than girls by the end of Year 11, which the school attributes to its persistent focus on raising achievement for boys by support for coursework, and a school-wide boy/girl seating plan policy in lessons. The sixth form's overall effectiveness is good, thanks to steady improvements in standards since the previous inspection. Good sixth-form teaching practice is shared, with a common 'do's and don'ts' checklist for teachers, in particular strong guidance on minimising didactic teaching. Sixth-form standards are broadly average in what is predominantly a good academic curriculum offered at A level, with progress measures also showing average achievement overall. Students almost always complete their planned courses. Because Year 11 standards have risen, more students have access to these advanced courses, and are able to choose from 30 different qualifications that include applied subjects such as business studies. This success has generated a dilemma for this school's deep commitment to comprehensive education at all levels through to the sixth form, because it simply cannot add more courses, due to lack of space. Students choosing a more vocational pathway do get good advice and support for moving elsewhere, but the long-term strategy is to provide at least some of these intermediate level courses through 'Saint's', thereby ensuring students maintain their good spiritual opportunities and support. To that end, a local collaboration between secondary schools has begun to deliver common timetables, and a pilot hospitality course includes St Augustine students. Good sixth-form leadership has established good student guidance and support. Improvements to the student common room provision and better advice to Year 11 candidates help transition to the sixth form. About two thirds of the Year 11 stay on at St Augustine's. Some students join from other local schools, and a few move to alternative providers. The school has very effective systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, which include systematic reviews by senior staff of every

faculty. Examples of these reviews show high quality evaluations and clear recommendations for further improvements that should be followed through carefully. Taken together with the good progress that all students make, and the positive results of parental and student surveys, this confirms that teaching here is good, and set to become even better. Staff confirmed good support for their own professional development and very good induction for teachers new to the school. The school acts on the outcomes of its surveys, for example in reviewing and beginning to improve the healthy options in the dining room. The curriculum enjoyed by students is good overall. One particular aspect recognised by the school, and its students, is the desire to increase the time spent in physical education lessons, which is currently well below national recommendations. There are some, but according to students, not enough, opportunities outside of the taught curriculum for sporting activities. There are a number of trips and visits available to students. Students want even healthier and tastier meal options, and better access to drinking water, and the school agrees. Students are involved in the Chaplaincy, for example by helping as mentors for fellow students. Students raise funds for a number of charities, and contribute to events with local parishes, feeder schools, and on-site hospitality for the local elderly at Christmas. There is a school council, but its impact is varied, and to some degree is not clearly connected with the sixth form council, or the work of the mentors. There is scope, as identified by the school, to involve more students in aspects of developing the school, and in particular to consider the responsibilities available for Year 11 students. This school does care, very much, for the well-being of its students and staff. As a result, respect for themselves, each other, and the environment really is a genuinely 'lived-out' ethos that all experience, including inspectors. There are good opportunities for everyone to share in daily acts of worship, and at the heart of their plans are further improvements in the prayer life of the school. This ethos is a major strength of this school, giving students a fully rounded education that includes good personal development overall, including excellent spiritual and moral guidance alongside good academic results. Tracking of academic progress is rigorous, regular, and rapid enough in directing intervention if students slip behind targets. A key feature is regular (every 10 weeks) school-wide assessments in every subject, in every year. Parents and pupils are subsequently involved in good twice-yearly reports and reviews. Some subjects routinely include students in self-assessment, which is a growing feature of good teaching practice. Day-to-day marking varies in quality, although the best examples give very good advice on how to further improve the work. Vulnerable learners are well supported and achieve as well as their peers. The school has correct child protection procedures, and risk assessments for trips are in place. School leadership at all levels is good. The school is delighted to have been successful in its recent bid to gain specialist science school status, and has good plans to use this to improve its community links, and ease the cramped accommodation. They have managed recent periods of acting headship very effectively, thanks to a shared sense of teamwork and commitment to the goals of the school. Leadership has been innovative in applying recommendations concerning workforce reform. Many support tasks are expertly carried out by well-trained support staff, and their role is a key strength of the school. Excellent school finance control is permitting a systematic refurbishment of rooms, additional curriculum-related resources, and a commitment to spending only when it is fit for

the purpose of improving teaching and learning. Information and communication technology resources are higher than national averages, with one computer for every two to three students. A county-wide 'Virtual Learning Environment' project has not yet established itself as a key teaching and learning resource, despite significant investment and potential. Every classroom has ICT projection facilities. Governors receive good information on school performance, for example in the detailed reports from departments and operate a well-established committee system to take key decisions. Their first-hand experience of day-to-day classroom life is, however, not as developed as they would like. They have determinedly managed finances over a long period in order to build more teaching space, to ensure wider opportunities for students. Governors should ensure their statutory oversight of policies is suitably rigorous and systematic. Students and parents should have every confidence in this good school, which is well placed to continue to bring success for its community.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

This is described in the paragraphs above.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

This is described in the paragraphs above.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This is described in the paragraphs above.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

This is described in the paragraphs above.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

This is described in the paragraphs above.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is described in the paragraphs above.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

This is described in the paragraphs above.

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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?	2	2
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	2	2
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?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

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	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	3	
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?	2	2
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?	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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
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

Thank you for your time and for your detailed and open responses to my questions when I visited your school recently. I was delighted to recognise your confidence and enthusiasm, and to acknowledge some of your concerns.

Saint's is a good school, through and through. This is in no small way because you, as students, consistently impress your teachers, and visitors, with your politeness, commitment to learning, and good behaviour overall. As a result, you are able to extract the best learning from teachers, who in turn are able to teach you without much by way of niggling disruption.

The school does realise that improvements can still be made, and it is already trying to raise the quality of, and ease of access to, healthy food and drink. It is considering ways to increase PE teaching time, and recognises that some of you would like more extra-curricular sports opportunities. I also think that the day-to-day marking should consistently tell you not just what the quality of your work is, but how you could further improve it; many subjects already do this well, and involve you in your own self-assessments. The school council should also give more of you a better voice in school affairs.

You can be genuinely proud of attending this school, because as a result you are likely to achieve your best, academically, spiritually and personally.

I wish you every success in your future,