



St Mary's College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118117
Local Authority Kingston-upon-Hull
Inspection number 291030
Inspection date 22 February 2007
Reporting inspector Heather Barnett HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Cranbrook Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Hull
Age range of pupils	11–18		HU6 7TN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01482 851136
Number on roll (school)	1531	Fax number	01482 804522
Number on roll (6th form)	287		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Michael Day
		Headteacher	Mr Ged Fitzpatrick
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector in a one day visit. Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior managers, governors, staff and students. They visited a range of lessons and observed students' conduct at break and lunchtime. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation and over 350 questionnaires completed by parents.

Description of the school

St Mary's College is a larger than average Roman Catholic comprehensive school with sports college status. The number of students entitled to free school meals is below average and there are lower than average percentages of students from minority ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language. However, the number of students with English as an additional language has risen significantly over the last few years. There are lower than average percentages of students with statements of special educational needs or who need additional help with their learning. The school has achieved Investors in People status, Healthy Schools Award and International School status. It is a training school, supporting the continuing professional development of staff, and part of a pilot for a collaborative extended school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Mary's College is a good and improving school with some outstanding features. Its Catholic ethos permeates all its activities. Students come in to the school with average standards, make good progress and reach above average standards by the end of Year 11. Teaching and learning are good. There is a clear focus within the school on continuous improvement in teaching and learning and particularly on meeting the learning needs of each individual. The curriculum is a strong and developing feature. It is flexible, with early starts to GCSE options in year 9, and has developed well in vocational areas, for example catering, construction and engineering. All the curriculum changes are yet to be fully embedded, but they are already supporting the improvement in results that can be seen at Key Stage 4. There are very good extra-curricular activities, many of them in sport, which students demonstrably enjoy.

The care, guidance and support that students receive are outstanding, as is students' personal development. Students enjoy school, and feel well cared for. They are very aware of how to stay safe and healthy and well prepared for life after school. However, whilst attendance is improving, it remains satisfactory overall. The school is aware of this and has strategies in place to further improve in this area.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

This is a good sixth form with some outstanding features, where learners enjoy their studies and the very active role they take in the school. Overall achievements and standards are good. Although learners do very well in some subjects, achievement is weaker in others however. Staff are aware of areas for improvement and have put appropriate strategies in place to address them. Teaching is good. There is a good range of courses which is being developed further to meet the demands of learners. There is excellent care, guidance and support, and learners always feel they have someone to whom they can talk. Careers guidance is outstanding, as is learners' personal development and well-being. Leadership and management are good. While recent changes to staffing, such as the expanded role of non-teaching staff, are already showing benefits, it is too early to see the full impact of these initiatives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further raise attendance.
- Ensure all subjects reach the same high standards in supporting student achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students join the school with broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. They make good progress and achieve standards that are above average by the end of Key Stage 3 in all core subjects. This good progress continues through Key Stage 4 so that students attain above average standards in GCSEs. Year on year the school has successfully raised students' achievement taking their backgrounds and starting points into account. The proportion of students attaining five or more A*-C grades in GCSE has continued to improve, and in 2006 was clearly above the national average. However, the proportion of students with five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics was closer to the national average. English results improved markedly in 2006, although mathematics and science were below expectation. The school has already put strategies into place to address these issues and assessments to date show it is on track to meet its challenging targets for 2007.

As a result of very effective support, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, students in the care of the local authority, and students for whom English is not their first language make good progress. Gifted and talented students also make the same good progress as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development is outstanding. They talk confidently with adults in a thoughtful and mature way and speak about their school with pride. They know how to keep themselves healthy and promote their physical well-being. Students enjoy school. In particular they enjoy their accomplishments that come from learning during the day and the wide range of additional activities available out of school. Attendance is satisfactory, and is clearly improving due to effective actions by the school. Students act safely, both in and out of school so that school visits and outdoor pursuits pass without incident.

Students are exceptionally well prepared for life after school, with many taking part in 'Young Enterprise' and other initiatives to develop high levels of work-related skills. Students' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Many opportunities for reflection and to contemplate enhance their spiritual development. Students' moral understanding is well developed and this is seen in the respect and consideration that characterise their relationships with others. Overall, behaviour is good and improving as a result of effective strategies now in place. Many older students act as positive role models to younger students. Cultural development too is outstanding through the many opportunities for art, music and drama, and the wide international links with schools in other countries.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Staff possess strong subject knowledge and use questioning well to check students' understanding. Lessons are well planned and conducted at a brisk pace, maintaining students' interest in the activities and stimulating their enjoyment. Students relish practical activities and are keen to explain what they are doing and why they need to do it. There is a clear focus on assessment and good progress is being made in promoting consistency of approach. Some areas already use assessment information very well in planning and others are improving. Students are aware of their targets in subjects, and what they need to do to improve.

All staff are constantly working on ways to improve teaching and learning and there is much sharing aimed at spreading best practice. Meeting the needs of individual students in all sessions is a key theme, and developments in this area were plain to see.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. It is broad and balanced at Key Stages 3 and 4, with specialist status being the driving force to move it forward, particularly in Key Stage 4. This started with a Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualification in sport which now has a full range of qualifications from level 1 to level 3 and has led to BTEC developments in many other subjects such as retail and media.

Good use has been made of flexibility, for example introducing GCSE options at the start of Year 9 and the Creative Partnerships project. However, the curriculum changes are not yet embedded totally across St Mary's, so their full impact cannot be judged, although early indications are very positive. The school is involved in a range of partnership working aimed at broadening options, and to try to tailor those options to meet the needs of all individuals. There are extensive extra-curricular activities, which are both highly valued by students, and have high levels of uptake.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care guidance and support are outstanding. Pastoral care is exceptional and reflects the school's Catholic ethos. It makes a vital contribution to students' well-being. Thoroughly well developed approaches that involve teachers, tutors and learning

mentors support all students, including those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is not their first language. This pastoral work ensures that everyone feels part of the school, and is able to make good progress. Child protection procedures are fully in place and the school meets the current government requirements for safeguarding students. Comprehensive arrangements for careers guidance and work experience, together with links to the further and higher education sectors, very effectively prepare students for the next stage in their lives.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. A very strong senior leadership team has been developed over the last few years by the headteacher which has set a clear direction for the school. This has led to an improving trend in results at Key Stages 3 and 4. The role of middle managers is being developed so they are accountable but also empowered - for example, by the use of focus groups. Financial issues have been dealt with so that the school is in a much better position to move on than has been the case in previous years.

The process of self-evaluation is strong in departments, and is currently in the process of being embedded in other teams, such as year teams. Teaching and non-teaching staff are used well to support students, and continuing professional development is effectively linked to school priorities. Many new initiatives have been put in place over the last few years and are starting to show positive effects, although they are not yet thoroughly embedded in all departments. However, all areas are working well together, and with external partners, to share best practice. The role of the governing body has been developing over the last few years. They have a clear idea of strengths and areas for improvement, an effective committee structure and provide appropriate support and challenge to the leadership team. The benefits of specialist status have been used to good effect.

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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?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

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?	1	1

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.

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	2	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

St Mary's College
Cranbrook Avenue
Hull
HU6 7TN
23 February 2007

Dear Students

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for being so pleasant and helpful when we came to your lessons, talked with you in discussion groups or met you around the school. We also found the questionnaire completed by your parents very helpful.

We think that your school is a good school that is providing you with a good education and preparing you very well for the future. You make good progress in your studies and achieve good results in your examinations. Teaching is good and you particularly enjoy practical activities. The school provides outstanding care and support for all of you, which is based on its Catholic ethos. We were pleased to note that there were few instances of bullying, and that you feel any unpleasant incidents are quickly resolved. Almost everywhere we went we found that you were keen to learn and that you behaved very well. Your personal development is excellent. You like the range of subjects you can study and enjoy all the extra-curricular activities, especially the sporting and performing arts ones.

The senior managers of the school have a good understanding of all that goes on in the school, and are working to make it even better. The specialist status of the school has greatly helped in its recent development. The school is doing very well, but there are some areas where we feel it can improve further. We have asked the school to:

- Ensure all subjects reach same high standards in supporting your achievement.
- Further raise attendance.

You have a role to play here by making sure your attendance is as good as possible. The inspection team hope you are pleased with the things we have said about the school and are proud of what you, your staff, governors and parents have achieved.

Yours sincerely

Heather Barnett

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools