



# Accrington St Christopher's Church of England High School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 119791  
**Local Authority** Lancashire  
**Inspection number** 291544  
**Inspection date** 31 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Ann Wallis

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 address</b>	Queen's Road West
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Accrington, Lancashire
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		BB5 4AY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01254 232992
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	951	<b>Fax number</b>	01254 355215
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Frank Whitehead
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alasdair Coates
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 April 2002		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Christopher's is a specialist technology college of average size. The school serves an unusually large area with students coming from over 50 feeder primary schools. The percentage of students who take free school meals is well below average although the school's catchment area has a wide socio-economic mix and contains wards where there is significant deprivation. Few students come from minority ethnic groups and there are very few whose first language is not English. Below average numbers of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry to the school is above average. The school has gained Investors in People and Sportsmark awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Christopher's is a good school with many outstanding features. The school modestly judges all aspects of its work to be good but inspectors find some of them to be outstanding. The leadership and management are excellent as is the quality of the curriculum. Likewise, personal development and well-being of students and the care, guidance and support they receive. A warm and welcoming ethos pervades the school and relationships between all who work there are excellent. Students' achievement, health, safety and enjoyment are at the heart of the school's work. In this supportive and nurturing atmosphere, which is underpinned by strong Christian values, children thrive. They enjoy learning and achieve well.

Students and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Students were very keen to tell inspectors about the many strengths of their school and struggled to find any real weaknesses. Many parents wrote positively and at length about the school's successes. Typical comments included, 'the support, encouragement and nurturing our children have received have been second to none' and 'my daughter is expected to achieve A grades in her GCSEs due to the continuous dedication, encouragement and support of the teachers in this school'.

Students enter St Christopher's with attainment which is above average. They make good progress, which accelerates as they move through the school and by Year 11, they attain well above average standards. This represents good achievement for all students given their capabilities and starting points. Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good in the majority of lessons. Some teaching is outstanding and some is satisfactory. To raise the standard of all teaching to that of the best by continually sharing good practice is a priority which the school has recognised and is already beginning to address.

An excellent curriculum is very well matched to students' needs and contributes to their good achievement and enjoyment of learning. The school develops students' basic skills very well and provides them with a wide range of course choices in Years 10 and 11 which are very well suited to learners of all abilities. Students' participation in the outstanding range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities which take place is extremely high.

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and a real strength of St Christopher's. It sets the tone of mutual respect and support for all members of the school community. He is supported by a talented team of senior leaders who share his vision for the school and whose complementary skills ensure that appropriate priorities for development are followed through. The school's already good self-evaluation is now becoming even sharper and strong recent staff appointments to key posts have increased the school's capacity to raise achievement and improve teaching and learning further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Share good practice more widely in order to raise the standard of all teaching to that of the best.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are well above average and achievement is good. Test results at the end of Year 9 were above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in 2005 and have risen further in 2006. Test and examination results in English were below those of other core subjects in 2005 but the school's successful strategies to rectify this are now resulting in rising standards and good achievement in this key area.

GCSE examination results in 2005 were well above average and these improved again in 2006 maintaining an upward trend. The school's challenging targets were met. Students achieved best in information and communication technology (ICT), child development, electronics, catering and resistant materials and least well in art and graphics. Given their capabilities and starting points all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students' behaviour is exemplary in most lessons and very good around the school especially in congested areas and narrow corridors. Students have excellent attitudes to learning. They attend school regularly, really enjoy learning and most work very hard. Students are well aware of the benefits of healthy eating, know how to stay safe and many participate enthusiastically in regular exercise.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school's Christian ethos underpins the teaching of spirituality and of social and moral values, but students also have a very good awareness of other faiths and cultures. Regular assemblies and a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme all contribute very well to students' personal development.

Older students spoke enthusiastically about the many opportunities they are given to take responsibility as prefects, form and sports captains, members of the school council and as mentors to Year 7 students. As one Year 11 mentor commented, 'Year 7 students grow up quickly and become more sensible because of the atmosphere in this school'. Students also develop excellent teamwork skills through, for example, enterprise and fund raising projects which prepare them very well for the world of work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Typical lessons are well planned, well structured and conducted at a brisk pace. Teachers are knowledgeable and explain their subjects

clearly. Most teachers make good use of ICT to provide attractive resources which engage students' interest so they achieve well. In an outstanding lesson, students were seen making excellent progress because of the very high expectations the teacher had of his students and the excellent classroom relationships which were based on mutual respect and trust. Where teaching is only satisfactory, students are not as actively involved in their own learning and the pace of the lesson is slower.

The school recognises that whilst teaching and learning are mainly good or better, there is variation in the quality of teaching between and within subject areas. To address this, teachers are beginning to coach and support each other to raise standards and achievement further. Teachers mark students' work thoroughly and most use the results of tests and assessments well to plan their students' future learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding. The school capitalises on its excellent links with other partners to provide a very good range of academic and vocational courses for older students. The school has benefited greatly from becoming a specialist technology college. Huge improvements have been made in the provision for and use of ICT since the last inspection to the extent that this area has now become a strength of the school. Students have excellent ICT skills and those of literacy and numeracy are developed well.

An outstanding range of enrichment activities includes many trips and visits, both overseas and locally. These extend students' knowledge particularly of sport, the arts, geography and languages and are a major highlight of many students' school life. Through the outstanding work of the music department, many young musicians have had opportunities to perform locally and travel abroad.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

A caring ethos extends throughout the school. Systems for safeguarding students and child protection arrangements are comprehensive. Students feel very safe and have no doubts that they can turn to an adult if they have any worries. They recognise and value the excellent relationships which exist in their school and make it such a supportive place to be. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported by teachers, classroom assistants and mentors.

Staff know their students very well and track their progress carefully. Students receive very good academic guidance and outstanding personal care and support. As a result, they achieve well and their personal development is excellent. Very good transition arrangements between schools ensure that students settle in quickly and are very well prepared for the next stages of their education.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders at all levels are firmly focused on raising standards and are continually striving to improve teaching and learning. An excellent school improvement plan sets very clear priorities for development. Most subject leaders monitor their departments well and self-evaluation is becoming increasingly consistent, rigorous and embedded in the work of the school. Governors play a full part in school life. They are very involved in strategic planning and provide a high level of support and challenge.

Resources are deployed very effectively and the school's accommodation has been improved significantly in recent years. Given the school's relatively low expenditure per student, it provides outstanding value for money. All of the areas for improvement that were noted at the last inspection have been addressed successfully and the school has good capacity to improve further.

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## 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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

Accrington St Christopher's Church of England High School

Queen's Road West

Accrington

Lancashire

BB5 4AY

31 January 2007

Dear Students

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school yesterday. We are particularly grateful to all of you who took time to talk to us and tell us about the many strengths of your school.

What we have said about your school in the inspection report:

- You reach well above average standards and achieve well.
- You are given outstanding care, guidance and support and as a result your personal development is excellent.
- The leadership and management of your school are outstanding.
- The opportunities you are offered to study a range of subjects in school and to take part in activities, trips and visits outside of school are outstanding.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Improve the already good quality of teaching even further.

You can help your school improve even more by continuing to attend regularly and working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Best wishes

Mrs A Wallis

(Lead inspector)