

St Paul's Catholic College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125311
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	295439
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	John Challands

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1003
6th form	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Patricia Noons
Headteacher	Mr Simon Uttley
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
School address	The Ridings Green Street Sunbury-on-Thames TW16 6NX
Telephone number	01932 783811
Fax number	01932 786485

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2007
Inspection number	295439

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size. Students come to the school from a wide range of both relatively prosperous and less affluent areas in the north of Surrey and West London; overall their prior attainment is above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is average. Almost one third of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has held specialist status in technology since 1996.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. St Paul's provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education with several good features. The school is very proud of its Catholic Christian ethos and the care and guidance it provides. It also takes justifiable pride in the significant improvements made in several different areas during the last school year. Academic standards are average but are improving and achievement is satisfactory. Although some higher achieving students are not achieving as well as predicted, most students in Key Stage 3 are beginning to achieve well. Students in Key Stage 4 do not achieve quite as well but a picture of sustained improvement is beginning to emerge. These outcomes have been achieved through the exceptional leadership of the headteacher with very good support from the senior leadership team. There is a very clear vision and direction for the school.

Improvements in achievement have been supported primarily by very accurate self-evaluation leading to the school's clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. There are still some inconsistencies, but the school has a realistic and well informed view of what needs to be done in this area. Assessment has been used very effectively to set clear targets for improvement for students. Academic guidance is very strong. Underachievement is quickly identified and students receive appropriate support.

Students receive good care. Staff know the students well and respond appropriately to problems as they occur. Attendance of students has improved but is still slightly below the national average. Absences in Year 11 are the biggest problem. Most parents are very supportive of the school although a few are still concerned about the behaviour of students. The inspection team found that behaviour was generally good and most students support this view. Students also feel the school has made considerable progress during the last year in developing the use of computers in lessons. The school's status as a specialist technology college has provided a clear focus for this and information and communication technology (ICT) is increasingly used by the school to provide further support and information for students away from the classroom.

The school is increasingly outward looking and very good links with the community are developing to help the school deliver its curriculum and to ensure that students are prepared for life after school. Governors have a clear idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide good support for the school. The school has made very good progress in addressing the issues identified at the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form is satisfactory overall in its effectiveness but there are many good features. At the last inspection a year ago there were concerns about all aspects of the sixth form but these issues have been addressed and significant improvement achieved. In the 2006 A/AS level examinations standards were below national averages and progress at the time was inadequate. Standards are still below average but improving and students are making satisfactory progress from their starting points on entry. Progress is better in Year 12 where the intensive focus on teaching quality, use of assessment, support for students and curriculum development are having the greatest impact.

Students praise the teachers for their level of dedication and personal support both in lessons and outside normal hours. Independent learning is actively encouraged and students take great advantage of the virtual learning environment on the intranet but would like a larger area in which to access computers. Tutors are playing an effective part in guiding students. They regularly review progress towards predicted target grades. The curriculum has been extended to provide a greater choice, including more vocational and applied options to meet the students' needs and aspirations. A consortium arrangement with several other schools and colleges widens the choice further.

Students' personal development is good as a result of the good care and commitment of teachers. Attendance has vastly improved during the last year although punctuality is still a problem. Students willingly take responsibility. Good examples of this are undertaking 'community service' and helping teachers with extra-curricular sport. Many students become involved in charity fundraising.

The sixth form is well led and managed. The new leadership structure is proving effective in realising the significant improvement. Leaders have a clear sense of purpose and high expectations of work and commitment from students. Students say 'They really care about us, and the sixth form is a lot different now'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of students of all abilities.
- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve the students' attendance, especially in Year 11.

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 is satisfactory and standards are now broadly average. In 2006, the results of tests in Year 9 showed that students had made satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3. However, GCSE results were below the national average and this showed that students had made inadequate progress in Key Stage 4. This year although some higher achieving students are not making appropriate progress most students in Key Stage 3 are beginning to make good progress. There has been a clear improvement in standards in Key Stage 4 showing that the students' achievement is now satisfactory. There is clear evidence that more consistent use of strategies to support students who are failing to meet their targets is having an impact. The school's focus on improving teaching and learning is beginning to improve standards. The quality of teaching and learning, however, is still not consistent across all subjects. Most students are now aware of their targets and are aware of what is required to improve. Students from ethnic minority groups and those with learning disabilities achieve as well as other students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Moral and social development is strong, and spiritual development is enhanced through regular prayer and reflection. Students' cultural development is well sustained through their work in subjects and through extra-curricular opportunities including visit programmes to museums, galleries, places of worship and foreign study trips.

Most students enjoy their lessons and have a positive attitude to their studies. Behaviour in lessons is generally good and this improvement continues because the large majority of students welcome the school's new policies on behaviour. The school now has very secure arrangements for ensuring that pupils who find it difficult to develop within the school environment are provided with alternatives. Attendance is below average although there have been improvements because of the strategies implemented by the school. Further improvement is needed in Year 11.

Most students feel that the school is a safe environment in which to learn. Students' healthy lifestyles are enhanced by the good uptake of extra-curricular activities involving exercise. In addition the school council has been influential in bringing healthy options to the canteen menu that many students appreciate.

Students generally relate well to one another and to staff. They feel that members of staff work positively on their behalf. Students contribute strongly to the school community, responding positively to the significant increase in the range of roles and responsibilities for students (prefects, lead learners, school and year council members, peer mentors and other roles). These leadership and teamwork contributions allow students to develop personal qualities important for their future economic well-being. Students contribute well to the community beyond the school. Their fundraising supports local as well as other charities at home and abroad.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. A very effective monitoring programme is in place which has identified strengths as well as aspects for development. In discussion students were very positive about improvements in many of their lessons but said that in a few classes some problems remain. The school is aware of inconsistencies and is working systematically to deal with them.

Most lessons have good pace and teachers support students' learning effectively through the use of ICT. Teachers plan short well-focused activities which motivate students and help them concentrate. In an outstanding languages lesson the teacher made the activities fun, encouraged all students to take part and gave them the confidence to speak to the whole-class. Teachers develop students' literacy skills in a variety of ways and place strong emphasis on the use of key words and specialist subject vocabulary. In some less effective lessons, work does not

provide sufficient challenge for the highest attaining students. At times the behaviour of some students is not managed effectively and this slows the pace of learning for all. Students mentioned that some of their work is marked regularly. They said that in some subjects marking is very helpful in guiding them to improve but this is not consistent across the school. This was confirmed during the inspection.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school now offers a good curriculum following improvement to the range of courses offered in all key stages. The curriculum is now well-matched to the range of students. The school has successfully addressed the issues highlighted at the last inspection in relation to citizenship education, personal, social, health education and ICT. The school continues to review progress in these areas. It continues to expand the Year 10 and 11 curriculum by introducing pathways that give opportunities for some students to study applied or vocational subjects and others to take further academic options, including early entry to exams. This has strengthened students' commitment to learning by matching the curriculum to learners' aspirations and potential and more changes are planned in the future. The school's very good links with other schools, colleges and agencies have enabled a broad range of other curriculum opportunities to be offered, both academically and vocationally and in terms of work related learning.

The very extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities provided by the staff is enjoyed by a high percentage of students and also contributes strongly to the students' personal development and well-being. Opportunities range from subject clubs to sports and arts clubs and activities. In addition, opportunities exist for students to go on religious retreat and enhance their spiritual and moral development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

This aspect of the school's work is good. Students are well known to staff and the needs of individuals are dealt with effectively by the pastoral staff and those who support students with special educational needs. Good links are in place with outside agencies to provide support for students who have particular difficulties. Arrangements for safeguarding all students are good. The school is working hard to improve students' achievement. Students' progress is being monitored regularly and targets set. The school keeps good records of students' progress. Many staff are using these effectively in lessons to ensure appropriate progress for students but this is not consistent. During discussions students explained what their targets were and how they have received guidance on how they can be achieved. Students who have been identified as in danger of underachieving receive mentoring from senior staff and students in Year 11 are given extra revision sessions and coursework support.

Older students are trained to act as peer supporters and younger students say that they have confidence in them. Strategies and procedures for dealing with bullying have developed significantly over the last year and most students consider the school to be a safe and secure environment. A minority of students expressed some concerns but agreed that the school dealt with problems very effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The exceptional leadership of the headteacher with good support from a dedicated group of governors provides an environment where students want to learn and where teachers are given every encouragement to improve. Catholic Christian values are a significant feature of the work of the school. The headteacher provides a clear and purposeful vision and direction for the school which is understood and shared by staff. He is very well supported by the senior leadership team.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection in all key issues identified. There is a very clear focus on improvement and achievement which is well supported by the school's use of a range of information on individual pupils. There are very good procedures for monitoring teaching and learning and the school miss few opportunities to improve the quality of teaching. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain a priority for the school to tackle. Staff are keen to improve and there are very good arrangements to ensure the professional development of all staff. These are clearly linked to a comprehensive school improvement plan. Many middle managers provide good support for the senior leadership team. Specialist technology school status is very well managed and has had a significant impact on many aspects of the school curriculum during the last year. Parental satisfaction is high and most parents recognise the good progress made by the school during the last year. Well informed governors understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They are critical friends and make a significant contribution to all aspects of school life. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Financial planning is good and efficient use is made of resources. This is an inclusive school and pupils, with the active encouragement of staff, have equal access to all activities.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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?	2	2
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?	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	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	2	

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?	2	2

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?	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	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	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

22 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of St Paul's Catholic College, Sunbury-on-Thames, TW16 6NX

As you will know, following your school inspection in March 2006, we re-inspected your school recently. We enjoyed our discussions with you in meetings, in lessons and around the school. You were friendly and polite and most of you were very keen to tell us how much the school has improved during the last year.

We agree with you. The school has improved in many ways and is now offering you a satisfactory standard of education. It is good in several respects. You are well cared for and the school is working very hard to make sure that all the teaching is as good as the best, so that you all achieve as well as you can. Some of you are still not working hard enough but more is now being done by the school to provide extra support and encouragement to help you. You tell us that behaviour around the school and in lessons continues to improve but that just occasionally bad behaviour is upsetting and can still disrupt lessons. We agree with you but did find that most students were keen to learn, behaved well and were very appreciative of the efforts of staff to help them. Many of you were also very enthusiastic about the additional subjects you can now choose and about the improvements to the access and use of computers in lessons. Most of you were also particularly keen to tell us how much the school has improved since your new headteacher arrived.

Our view is that the school has improved considerably but that improvements can still be made. Achievement in GCSE and examination results in the sixth form has improved but is still not as high as it could be and there are still some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Attendance is also a problem. You can play your part in making sure that these improvements are made and that the staff's view that your school can become an outstanding school becomes a reality.

Yours sincerely

John Challands

Lead Inspector