

St Wilfrid's Catholic High School and Sixth Form College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108297
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	301965
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Sara Morrissey HMI

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	1656
6th form	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Sean Durcan
Headteacher	Mr John McNally
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Cutsyke Road Featherstone Pontefract West Yorkshire WF7 6BD
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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

St Wilfrid's Catholic High School is a larger than average school near Featherstone, north east of Wakefield. It has grown in size since the last inspection and is planning for a further increase in pupil numbers. Pupils come from a variety of social backgrounds and are attracted from a wide area, including communities in neighbouring local authorities. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with schools nationally. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased and is approaching the national average. The school is a designated resource base for pupils with speech and language or communication difficulty. It has had specialist school status since 2000, when it became a Language College. In September 2006, the school was awarded a second specialism in vocational subjects. A new headteacher was appointed to the school in May 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Wilfrid's is a good and improving school with some outstanding features. A strong and inclusive Christian ethos underpins the work of the school and supports a community in which pupils can thrive. Pupils enjoy coming to school: they are well motivated and keen to learn. They feel safe and grow in confidence in a learning environment that is encouraging and supportive. Consequently, standards are rising and are above the national average.

Pupils join the school having attained standards that are broadly in line with those seen nationally. Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress overall during their time at school and achieve well by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 4. Effective systems support those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress is excellent. However, opportunities are missed in lessons for pupils to participate actively or take responsibility for their learning and so the quality of learning in lessons is not always as good as it might be.

A number of excellent aspects of provision, and those relating to spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, contribute to pupils' personal development and well-being, which are outstanding. Partnerships with external agencies ensure that pupils' individual needs are met. High expectations are communicated by teachers and pupils' behaviour is good. Relationships between adults and students are warm and based on mutual respect. A broad and innovative curriculum matches pupils' needs closely and a wide variety of extra-curricular activities are well attended. Many pupils also give their time generously to support charities and willingly take responsibility to help others in the school community. Specialist status has effectively increased links with primary schools and the international community, for example during 'International Week'.

The headteacher has provided clear direction and senior leaders know their school well as a result of accurate self-evaluation. The school development plan provides a concise blueprint for future improvement and staff know what they are required to do to tackle priorities. Governors know the school well and provide good support and challenge. The school enjoys a good reputation locally and the great majority of parents value highly the education that it provides their child. Staff work together as a team and speak of the strong community spirit that exists in the school. The systems and structures that have been introduced have provided the means by which teachers can fulfil their roles effectively and secure further improvement. Consequently, the school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school is more generous in its judgement of the sixth form's overall effectiveness because, although there are some outstanding aspects of provision, too little account has been taken in the past of students' achievement. In Year 12 students underachieve and do not all make the progress expected of them. They make better gains in their learning during Year 13 and, although some inconsistencies exist between subjects, their achievement is satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. However, recent improvements have indicated a good capacity to improve further because leaders have a clear vision and a determination to raise standards further. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and some good practice exists. Weaknesses have been identified and action has been taken to improve teaching and learning in identified subjects and to develop students'

independent learning skills. Individual targets, based on good use of assessment, are used increasingly well to help students keep on track and maintain their progress. Marking gives good information about what students need to do to improve further.

A good and inclusive curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of additional activities in sport, the arts and music. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form. They are given good academic guidance and provided with a suitable range of courses to meet their needs and aptitudes. Consequently, the vast majority complete their courses. Links with other institutions are effective in broadening opportunities. Students speak highly of the dedication of their teachers. Pastoral support is excellent and contributes well to students' personal development, which is outstanding. Students' behaviour is exemplary. They have very positive attitudes and make a significant contribution to the life of the school. Good careers advice enables students to make informed decisions about their next step on leaving the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in sixth form, particularly in Year 12.
- Improve the quality of learning in lessons throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards attained by pupils by the end of Key Stage 4 are higher than average and their achievement is good overall.

During Key Stage 3, pupils' make satisfactory progress overall, although variations exist between core subjects. In both mathematics and science results have exceeded predictions and the upward trend over the past three years has been faster than that recorded nationally. Pupils have not achieved as well in English over the last three years, but recent strategies to tackle underachievement have yielded rapid and dramatic improvements in pupils' progress.

Pupils work hard and make outstanding progress in Key Stage 4, consistently meeting or exceeding predicted outcomes. GCSE results, including English and mathematics are above the national average. Despite a dip in 2006, trends have risen faster than the national rate. Pupils respond positively to good quality teaching, detailed and accurate assessment systems and the well-focused support offered to potential underachievers. In both key stages boys achieve slightly better than girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are always fully included and make outstanding progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school clearly articulates its Christian ethos, which is inclusive and supportive of all pupils. As a result the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of its pupils is excellent. Behaviour is good. In lessons and around the school pupils behave responsibly, relate well to adults and show care and concern for others. Attendance is good and improving, owing to the rigorous systems for following up unreported absences and more persistent absentees. Pupils enjoy being in school and particularly appreciate the wide range of enrichment activities on offer. Participation rates in these activities are high and

are encouraged by the school's provision of late buses to help those who rely on transport. There are very many opportunities for pupils to express their views and positively influence the life of the school. The school council has contributed well to the drawing up of some policies, particularly bullying and promoting healthy lifestyles and eating. Pupils feel very safe in school, are prepared to tackle bullying on their own initiative and are fully confident that the few instances are swiftly resolved. Teachers are beginning to encourage more independent and group work in class to enable pupils to develop further the skills of teamwork, analysis and evaluation necessary for the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is good and results in good levels of achievement. Most lessons are characterised by the very good relationships between adults and pupils that promote a positive climate for learning. In the best lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge is shared with enthusiasm. Learning objectives are clearly communicated and a good variety of well planned activities proceed at a brisk pace to engage and sustain pupils' interest. In addition to the strengths in teaching, the good attitudes to work of most pupils make an important contribution to their progress. However, in some lessons, teachers do not use assessment information about different groups of learners to plan lessons that engage pupils actively in their learning. At times, teachers talk for too long and pupils become passive. Opportunities are also missed to use information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, despite the presence of these resources. There is some good practice in marking, but it does not consistently tell pupils how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good and meets well the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In this specialist Language College, all but a few study at least one modern foreign language until they are 16 and opportunities exist to study up to three languages. The specialist college status has given further impetus to the effective development of literacy skills across the curriculum. The impact of the school recently gaining specialist status in vocational subjects is seen in the broad range of vocationally-based courses available throughout the school: for example the school is one of very few to offer a City & Guilds course in hairdressing.

Pupils make good progress through the main school in developing basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Enterprise activities are being developed to improve further the currently satisfactory provision. The personal, social, health and citizenship curriculum is comprehensive and it is informative in helping pupils to adopt a healthy and safe lifestyle. The good range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum and supports their personal development very effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good, with several outstanding features. Child protection procedures are firmly in place and all staff have received the required training. Safeguarding procedures and checks meet statutory requirements. Partnerships with feeder primary schools are excellent. Effective transition and guidance ease the transfer of pupils into the school and into sixth form and beyond. The Inclusion Centre provides excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Liaison with external agencies that provide children's services are outstanding, particularly with Catholic Care. This ensures that all the particular needs of pupils are met. The Speech and Language Resource provides effective specialised support for pupils from across and outside the authority who have communication difficulties or speech impairment. The school's rigorous behaviour policy is consistently applied and provides a suitable focus on rewarding good behaviour. This has contributed to a fall in the proportion of pupils given fixed term exclusions. The recently introduced systems for tracking pupils' progress and identifying underachievement are robust. Their full impact has yet to be reviewed and confirmed. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified, but provision is still in the early stages of development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school is well led. The headteacher has communicated a clear and inclusive educational vision that is centred on pupils' achievement and well-being. He has quickly prioritised areas for improvement and taken decisive steps to tackle identified weaknesses, involving all staff and other stakeholders in the school. Roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership group have been restructured to focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching and to raise achievement. The outcomes of effective and accurate monitoring and evaluation have been used to inform the school development plan which sets out a clear strategy for improving the school. The positive impact of actions taken can already be seen, for example in the improved provision in English.

The quality of middle leaders has been strengthened through training and most feel confident in their role of accountability. They value the support and challenge provided by senior leaders. Through a rigorous department review process they are able to assess progress made against key priorities and are more aware of the steps that are necessary to raise achievement further. Lesson observations by senior and middle leaders identify appropriately the strengths and weaknesses in teaching but do not all provide sufficient focus on how the quality of learning might be improved. The headteacher has provided opportunities for managers to share good practice and to take on additional responsibilities in order to strengthen their capacity as leaders.

Staff share the headteacher's vision and are ambitious for their school. High expectations are reinforced through the consistent implementation by adults of agreed school codes and the highly visible profile of the headteacher, who leads by example. Morale is high and staff value the opportunity to contribute to aspects of whole school developments: for example, the review of performance management procedures.

The governing body works effectively with the school and has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Governors hold the school to account and take an active interest in its work and daily life. Resources and accommodation are used effectively to support learning, although some science laboratories are not suitable for the effective delivery of the curriculum. The budget is managed appropriately and spending is focused on school priorities. Consequently, the school provides good 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?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	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	1	

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	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	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	3
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	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	

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

Inspection of St Wilfrid's Catholic High School, Sixth Form and Language College, Wakefield, WF7 6BD

Thank you for welcoming us during our recent inspection at St Wilfrid's. We greatly appreciated the time we were able to spend talking to you about your work and life in general at your school.

We think that St Wilfrid's is a good school, where you achieve well and have played an important part in the school's improvements by your hard work and good attitudes to learning. Many of you are proud of your school and your personal development is excellent. You attend regularly and appreciate the good relationships that you have with the staff. You benefit from good teaching, which helps you make good progress, and high levels of care, support and guidance, which help you become confident and prepare you well for the future. Some of you told us how much you appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities available and also the events that are arranged as part of the Language College. Mr McNally leads your school well and is well supported by all the staff who are ambitious for your school to do even better.

Staff know what is working well and also what needs to be improved. We have agreed with Mr McNally that there are a couple of things that the school might focus on to help you do even better. We feel that your teachers could plan lessons that give you the opportunity to be more actively involved in your learning so that you can make even better progress over time. We also feel that steps could be taken to raise achievement in the sixth form so that it matches the successes of pupils elsewhere in the school.

We are confident that St Wilfrid's School will go from strength to strength because everyone works together and knows the next steps for further improvement. You also have an important part to play by continuing to attend regularly, maintaining high standards of behaviour and taking an active part in all lessons so that you enjoy success in the future.