

Canon Slade CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105267
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	308814
Inspection dates	10–11 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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	1684
6th form	318
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Canon Dr Chris Bracegirdle
Headteacher	Mr Philip Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2004
School address	Bradshaw Brow Bolton Lancashire BL2 3BP
Telephone number	01204 333343
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This much larger than average and oversubscribed school has been a specialist college for the performing arts since 2003. The major criterion for admission is regular Christian worship for parents and children. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is low and there are very few at early stages of learning English. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. Canon Slade is a Training School for initial and continuing teacher training and holds a wide range of prestigious national awards, including Artsmark Gold and the Excellence in Mentoring award. The school has a large number of major partners and has established strong links with schools of other religious denominations.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which students' personal development and the care, support and guidance provided for them are outstanding. As parents comment, 'We are very happy that our sons and daughters attend Canon Slade because the school is equally committed to their academic and personal success.' Indeed, the school's status as a specialist college for the performing arts continues to have a profound effect on all aspects of its work and ensures that the raising of confidence and self-esteem among all its students is central to everything it does.

From well above average standards on entry to the school, students make good progress and reach exceptionally high levels in their academic work by the end of Year 11. Standards are very high in many subjects and achievement in English in Years 10 and 11 is outstanding. Dance, drama, music and sport play an important role in both the formal timetable and in the school's very impressive array of enrichment activities. The school is, therefore, understandably proud of its students' successes in the classroom, on the stage and on the sports field. It is aware that standards and progress in information and communication technology (ICT) are not high enough and have been below national averages for some years.

Students have the highest regard for their peers and the ethos of the school encourages them to support their classmates to the utmost. As a result, they are delighted when others achieve success and are more than willing to help when students are experiencing problems academically or personally. Students' behaviour in class and around school is very good and they demonstrate positive attitudes to their work and what the school is trying to do for them. They speak warmly of their teachers and believe that their voice is heard and their opinions represented very effectively by the school council. School assemblies are an outstanding start to the day and demonstrate just how much students are concerned to support a wide range of charities and do what they can for others who are less fortunate.

Students respond well to the good teaching they receive and are fully engaged in their learning overall. They value the opportunities they have to take responsibility for their own progress and are generally fully aware of what they need to do to reach high standards in their work. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of most and offers a wide range of academic subjects. Its vocational element is less impressive and there are not enough relevant work-related courses to meet the needs and interests of all students.

Teachers and support staff provide outstanding care and guidance for their charges. Students themselves say, 'They go the extra mile to make sure we can succeed.' Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those identified as vulnerable receive very effective support from a pastoral team whose overriding concern is to ensure that everyone can take full advantage of what the school has to offer.

Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, staff of all levels of experience pull together to ensure that the school continues to move forward very effectively. The governing body supports the leadership to the full but is not afraid to hold it rigorously to account. Excellent self-evaluation leading to good achievement and high standards in both academic and personal development demonstrates that the school has a good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Academic standards in the sixth form have been high for some considerable time and students consistently achieve well in a wide range of subjects, including the performing arts. Leadership and management are effective and self-evaluation of performance is very good. Students' personal development is outstanding. Students have very positive attitudes and are given many opportunities to take on responsibilities and contribute to the school and to the wider community. For example, they mentor younger students, provide classroom support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, assist with sporting and performing arts events and raise money for local, national and global charities. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. Students appreciate the excellent personal support and academic guidance they receive.

Students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities open to them, including learning sign language, joining the amnesty group and participating in the many sporting and performing arts activities. Very few students leave the sixth form during their courses and a high proportion go on to prestigious universities, with a significant number entering Oxford or Cambridge each year. The curriculum is good and there is a large choice of academic subjects. The school acknowledges, however, the need to increase the range of vocational and practical courses and develop collaborative arrangements to cater for those students for whom pure A-level study is not entirely appropriate. Sixth form accommodation is unsatisfactory and many classrooms are too small.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in ICT.
- Extend the curriculum in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form in order to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of all students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students enter the school with well above average standards, make good progress in all years and leave Year 11 with standards that are exceptionally high. Strategies to raise achievement in Key Stage 3 have had a positive impact and by the end of Year 9, standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are also very high.

Progress during Years 10 and 11 is particularly impressive. Achievement in English is outstanding and a reflection of the major improvements in the department since the previous inspection. Standards have risen steadily since 2004 and 84% of students obtained five or more GCSE grades at A* to C in 2007. Equally impressive is the fact that 80% of Year 11 students reached five higher grades including English and mathematics. The positive benefit of performing arts college status is reflected in the high standards achieved in music and drama. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and make good progress. As a result, no student left Year 11 without a qualification last year. Staffing issues and poor accommodation have impacted badly on performance in ICT over a number of years and standards continue to be below average in this subject in both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

Sixth form students achieve well at both AS level and A level. Standards are high overall and results in performing arts, English, media studies and music technology are worthy of particular mention.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students feel safe and very much enjoy being at Canon Slade. They speak warmly of the school, the opportunities it provides and the support they receive. Relationships are excellent and behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Attendance is consistently well above average and students' good achievement in basic skills prepares them well for the future.

Students have an excellent awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles and the school council has secured a greater variety of healthy options in the school canteen. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and students are given many opportunities for reflection and expression of their views. The school is aware of the limited cultural diversity within the school community and ensures that students have positive experiences of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Specialist status is used to support cultural links through visiting theatre groups. The school has also established successful links with a Muslim school and students have visited their partner school in South Africa. Students' contribution to the wider community through fundraising activities is outstanding and a wide range of charities benefit from their work. The school and sixth form councils enjoy a high reputation among their constituents: students feel they have a voice and that staff listen to it. They talk enthusiastically of the role they play in shaping the school and emphasise, in their words, 'The friendly and supportive atmosphere created by students and staff alike.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good and there are examples of outstanding practice in both key stages. Lesson preparation is comprehensive and teachers are concerned to plan activities which interest, motivate and challenge students. In a minority of lessons, learning is directed too much by teachers, and students sometimes become passive as a result. Nonetheless, most staff use a varied range of activities to stimulate enthusiastic learning and staff from the performing arts area work alongside their colleagues in other subjects to share good practice. Relationships between students and between students and teachers are a major strength and students are delighted when their classmates succeed. Most teachers have high expectations of what their students can do. In an excellent Year 10 history lesson, for example, the teacher's questioning was of such high quality that students gave reasons for the rise of Hitler with a confidence and accuracy which belied their years. Support staff demonstrate impressive skill when helping and encouraging those students who sometimes find the work difficult.

In an increasing number of lessons, students have opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers. Assessment and the quality of marking have improved significantly since

the previous inspection and students are now clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good and is complemented by a wide range of academic courses in both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The school's status as a specialist college for the performing arts provides many imaginative opportunities for the development of students' skills in drama, dance and music. Indeed, the performing arts programme has a major impact on students' outstanding personal development and builds their self-esteem and confidence to aim for high standards in all areas of school life. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from very well planned provision. The applied studies programme is developing apace and offers valuable experiences for those whose aptitudes lie outside the academic domain. The school recognises that the curriculum needs to be developed further in Years 10, 11 and in the sixth form, particularly in terms of vocational courses, if it is to meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of all its students more closely.

The school offers an outstanding range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. A significant number of students in all years attend after-school clubs, music and drama groups and a wide range of sports activities. Again, the impact of specialist status is clear.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Close liaison with over 100 feeder primary schools ensures the smooth entry of pupils to the school and the care, guidance and support they receive after they arrive are outstanding. One parent spoke for many when she said, 'My son has settled in very quickly, mainly because Canon Slade makes everyone feel welcome and happy in their new school.'

The exceptionally well developed system of pastoral care ensures that all students are known, valued and supported. Older students, including sixth formers, are trained to support and mentor their younger counterparts. Students and their parents comment positively about 'tremendous pastoral care which supports both the individual and the family'.

Academic guidance is of a high order and much improved since the previous inspection. Students are encouraged to aim for challenging targets in each subject and receive regular and detailed feedback on their performance and what is needed for improvement. Robust procedures are used to identify and monitor students who may be at risk and those likely to become disengaged. The school supports these students very well, making very effective use of teaching assistants and other support staff. Child protection procedures are in place and meet current guidelines. Careers guidance is comprehensive. There is also high quality advice for Year 9 students making option choices, for those entering the sixth form and for students wishing to pursue their studies at university level.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good, with some outstanding features. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher has set a clear vision for development so that students and staff aim for the highest standards in everything they undertake. His ability to listen to the views of all staff ensures that they feel valued and, together with a talented and committed senior leadership team, he has created an atmosphere where all feel able to contribute to the growing success of Canon Slade.

Expectations are high, leading to good academic achievement, outstanding care and support and a concern that students also flourish personally and as good citizens. In-house professional development for staff is excellent. Training School status promotes staff self-improvement with professional development opportunities and support for all colleagues being available in abundance. Middle leaders give very strong support to school development. The recently introduced 'Curriculum Focus' initiative enables all staff to understand subject strengths and areas for improvement. This rigorous self-evaluation at subject level impacts strongly raising staff awareness of issues in relation to the curriculum and to achievement in ICT. This linking of self-evaluation to the identification of priorities in the school development plan is outstanding and leads to students reaching challenging targets in their academic subjects. Governors provide good support and are actively involved in the life of the school, holding the school to account and acting as a critical friend to staff at all levels. Through this partnership, governors and staff work hard to provide the best they can for their students and for the wider community.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
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	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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?	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.

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	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

On behalf of all the members of the inspection team I would like to thank you for the friendly way that you greeted us and the help you gave us during the inspection of your school. We received a clear message from you that you are very happy with your school and are keen to do well. Examination results have been well above national averages for some years now. Your teachers recognise, however, that results in ICT are not good enough and we agree that this should be a priority area for improvement.

Canon Slade is a good school, it does so much for both your personal and academic development and that you are right to be very proud of it! The care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding and you respond by attending regularly and behaving very well at all times. In all the lessons we visited we found that you were very keen to learn and made good progress with your work. We saw some outstanding lessons that you greatly enjoyed, particularly in the performing arts subjects. Specialist college status has also brought in resources that have helped improve teaching and learning in other curriculum areas.

The school offers you a great deal of choice when it comes to selecting courses in Year 10 or in the sixth form. We think that this provision is good but could be even better if more vocational courses were introduced. Many of you join in the excellent range of after-school activities that the school offers.

The headteacher, governors and senior staff work hard to make the school as good as possible. Your teachers and other staff are very committed to you and to the community as whole. You told us that they are very approachable and deal quickly and effectively with any problems which arise.

You are fortunate to attend such a good school that does so much to help you. You play an important role too: many of you give up your time to support each other and to make sure that many charities benefit from your kindness.

Thanks again for your contribution to the inspection. We enjoyed watching you learn and wish you well for the future.