

Harrytown Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106143
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	309042
Inspection dates	1–2 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Graham Haney

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	805
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Cath Walsh
Headteacher	Mr D Cunningham
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2005
School address	Harrytown Lane Romiley Stockport Cheshire SK6 3BU
Telephone number	0161 4305277
Fax number	0161 4301700

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Harrytown Catholic High School is a smaller than average voluntary aided comprehensive school serving a wide area of Stockport. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. There is also an average proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have a statement of special educational need. The large majority of students are White British. Students enter the school with attainment above the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Harrytown Catholic High School is a caring school that provides a good level of support to its students through its commitment to spiritual and moral development. Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that it provides a satisfactory standard of education. The school is beginning to emerge from a period of change as it strives to alter practice and improve teaching to meet the changing needs of today's students. The headteacher and his senior team realised that the school's culture and entrenched custom needed challenging and changing. A greater emphasis has been placed on involving subject leaders in evaluating and raising achievement further. The school has gone through a period of staff absence combined with significant changes in both senior and subject leadership positions. At this time students were making insufficient progress. However, the improvements in classroom practice already introduced are having clear effects at Key Stage 3 (students in Years 7 to 9), but still have to impact effectively on achievement at Key Stage 4 (students in Years 10 and 11). Overall, standards are in line with national averages and student achievement is satisfactory.

Students say they enjoy school. They benefit from the many opportunities at lunchtime and after school to extend their learning and promote physical fitness. They speak enthusiastically of their achievements in, for example, the recent production of *Guys and Dolls*, which a parent described as 'fantastic'. Parents are very supportive of the care the school takes of its students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in their learning. A small proportion of students lack self-control, which leads to the education of others being adversely affected. In September 2005 the school opened its Evron inclusion centre, which has been successful in dealing with vulnerable students and those about to be excluded from school. Students usually behave and move around school sensibly, responding eagerly in lessons when they are able to contribute their own ideas. They show they are prepared to be responsible for their own learning, but some lessons do not foster this as much as they might. Some of the teaching is dull with too much talk by the teacher leading to students losing concentration and not making good progress.

Students show an interest in other cultures and traditions and this is further developed through work in religious education devoted to social harmony, prejudice and discrimination. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. The curriculum provides good opportunities for students to consider how they can develop healthy lifestyles. Citizenship lessons engage students in debate and they develop good enquiry, research and communication skills. Overall the curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of students and parents, but does not provide sufficient links to vocational courses at the age of 16 in other schools and colleges, or develop enterprise skills.

There is a clear commitment to improve the school. Subject leaders feel that they are being empowered and supported to take more responsibility to improve provision. However, impact varies from subject to subject and efforts are not always sufficiently focused on the most important issues. Agreed practice and procedure is not consistently implemented across the school, or effectively evaluated to know what is working best. There has been continuing refinement of the way the school sets targets. Students are knowledgeable about their personal targets, but some of these are not challenging enough. The use of attainment data is improving, but there is insufficient rigour in the tracking of students' progress and identifying what intervention needs to be put in place. Some teachers are not always matching the work in

lessons to the wide range of abilities in their class and this limits the rate of progress, particularly of higher attaining students.

The school's own evaluation of its work mainly matches inspection judgements and shows a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses. Governors understand the school and give clear direction and support to senior leaders. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, although some initiatives are too recent to have had full impact on overall standards and achievement. Consequently, the school shows a satisfactory capacity to further improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers provide appropriate levels of challenge for all students in all lessons to improve progress.
- Improve the use of data and information about student's achievements to monitor their progress more effectively and raise standards at both key stages.
- Make sure that improvement strategies are implemented consistently and effectively evaluated to judge their effectiveness.

A small proportion of the 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

The unvalidated 2007 results from the national tests for students at the end of Year 9 show that standards in Key Stage 3 are now above the national average. Mathematics results remained good and there were significant improvements in English and science from the previous year. Students are now making satisfactory progress in this key stage. There has, however, been unsatisfactory progress in the past. In 2005 and 2006 students did not achieve well enough and only attained levels in line with the national average. In particular, high attaining girls made less progress than expected. Action to improve the quality of teaching in English and science was taken and this has led to the improvements in progress. The school's own monitoring information shows that this satisfactory progress is now being maintained for the students currently in Year 9.

Progress in Years 10 and 11 is also satisfactory. Students are attaining standards that are in line with the national average at age 16. However, the lack of previous progress in Key Stage 3 is continuing to affect the overall achievement of students at the end of Year 11. Mathematics results have been in line with expectations over the past three years, but science and English results have been below expectation. There have been significant improvements in achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) as a result of courses that are better meeting the needs of students. Religious education is a strength of the school with many students attaining higher grades at GCSE.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The school's Christian nature underpins its approach to developing personal attributes of its students. The recently established school council allows the students' voice to be heard and their views are taken seriously, instilling confidence and giving them a sense that they matter.

Members of the school council spoke of how they have helped improve the school, believing, for example, that lunches are healthier now. This is borne out by the increase in the number of older students that take a school lunch. Students say they feel safe and that bullying is rare. Occasional incidents of bullying are usually dealt with effectively by the anti-bullying council. Students know the importance of being healthy. Many participate in sports clubs, and most adopt a healthy lifestyle. The school has strong and effective links with outside agencies, such as the local clergy. Involvement with the school's lay chaplain extends students' spiritual development and enables them to discuss their worries and anxieties.

Relationships between members of the school community are generally positive, and older students act as effective support for younger ones in a range of learning situations. Behaviour is satisfactory, as is attendance. Students say that their enjoyment of lessons varies. They respond well when they are actively involved in lessons, but also report some unexciting teaching. The Connexions service effectively supports the good take-up of students entering further education or employment with training.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers have good relationships with students and when this is combined with lively and enthusiastic teaching, students make good progress. A common system of planning guides teachers to set lesson objectives; however, it is often weakened because learning outcomes are not described explicitly in lesson plans. Consequently, teaching activities do not always match the needs of all students resulting, for example, in the more able students not making good progress. In the better lessons teachers challenge students, they provide opportunities for individuals, or groups of students, to contribute their own ideas and encourage them to assess their own and their fellow students' progress. Homework is set regularly. In some lessons a lack of pace and too much teacher input can lead to students losing attention and not making good progress. All pupils are set learning targets and their progress is monitored. In some subjects, such as science, students monitor and record their own progress, encouraging them to reflect on what they need to do to improve.

There is a lack of consistency in the marking of work, which means that some students are not well informed of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. There are examples of good marking practice. However, having indicated where students can improve their work, teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils have made the required improvements. Skilled teaching assistants know their students well and provide a good level of support for vulnerable students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced; it enables students to make satisfactory progress in developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum makes good provision for students planning to progress onto academic courses after leaving school. All students complete a course in information technology. There is a limited range of vocational subjects and opportunities for students to engage in work-related courses at Key Stage 4. This means that some students are not well prepared to move easily onto vocational courses, such as modern apprenticeships, in their next stage of learning. The curriculum makes good provision

for students' personal development, with its work on citizenship gaining particular recognition. The school recognises it could do more to prepare students for their future economic well-being, particularly in terms of developing their skills for employment and their understanding of business and enterprise. It provides good opportunities for students to consider how they can develop healthy lifestyles and stay safe. The involvement of all students in Years 9 to 11 in the Junior Sports Leader Award scheme enables them to develop a range of practical and leadership skills. The many activities at lunchtime and after school are well used by students to extend their learning and promote their physical fitness. Students are keen to stress the enjoyment they get from involvement in drama and music and the progress they have made as a result of attending extension classes in all areas of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Most students feel valued and they know who to turn to if they need help. Arrangements for keeping students safe follow current guidelines, and students' welfare is rightly regarded as a priority for staff. Parents praise care in the school, although a few are concerned about the quality of communication between them and the school and the account taken of their views. Provision for students who display challenging behaviour is broadly effective through the work of the inclusion centre. There is considerable support for students who have learning disabilities and/or difficulties. It focuses on their individual needs and enables them to achieve satisfactorily. Other vulnerable students, including children looked after by the local authority, are known and carefully nurtured by staff. The school recognises that academic guidance and support needs to improve further. Systems for tracking students' progress are regularly refined, but the information provided is not used rigorously enough to ensure students achieve the standards they are capable of. Students who arrive in Year 7 are subject to a very effective induction programme and this helps them to settle quickly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since the last inspection the leadership has managed well a number of significant staffing issues which have impacted adversely on students' standards and achievement. The school is now in a much more stable position, although the senior team is still being affected by long term absence. Senior leaders are hard working and share a commitment to raising standards. The restructuring of staff roles and responsibilities is ensuring they are all aware of the important part that they play in securing improvement. This is also leading to a more common approach to all aspects of the school's work. The quality of subject leaders is improving through extensive training. They and the newly appointed key stage managers are demonstrating a willingness to engage in monitoring performance and contribute to school improvement. Systems for quality assurance are becoming established and beginning to impact on improving progress and standards, for example the significant rise in English standards. The school has used a number of useful tools to monitor the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observations. These do not, however, give enough attention to the impact of the teaching on learning and student progress. Leaders understand that there is some way to go in making sure that all strategies, particularly recent initiatives, are fully embedded and evaluated to ensure their effectiveness. The school improvement plan is ambitious in the number of priorities highlighted and hence lacks a sharp focus on the key aspects to raise achievement. Governance

is good. Governors receive detailed information about the school which enables them to challenge senior leaders effectively.

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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
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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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
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**

Thank you for the polite and considerate welcome you extended to us in our recent visit and the time many of you gave to talk to us about your school. We were impressed by the mature way you answered our questions and discussed the activities you found helpful in your learning and what could be better. Your comments helped us to focus on the important areas that are needed to improve the school. The inspection found that the school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education.

You told us that you like lessons where you are not answering questions from books for long periods of time. You like to do things and to discuss and argue about ideas rather than listen too long to teachers talking. Some lessons that we saw were like that, exciting and interesting, but we want teachers to make more lessons more active. Those of you who are capable of getting the highest grades in exams should be challenged to think and work at higher levels in every lesson and this is a priority for the future.

You also told us how staff at the school make you feel safe and cared for. We agree with you that they do a good job looking after you. Most of you behave well around school, but there are a few who are less considerate towards others. It is clear that Christian values provide a strong framework for the school's work and this helps you learn about yourselves and the world. You described the targets you are set, but we would like to see your progress to meeting them checked regularly. New systems are now in place to check how well you are doing and provide guidance and support when necessary. It is a priority for the school to make sure the systems work well.

Teachers are trying a lot of new things to improve the way you learn. There are many new staff and everyone is keen to make learning better. They are working hard to change the way lessons are taught and trying to involve you in assessing your own work and that of your friends. We want them to ensure that these and other new approaches are put in place by everyone. We want teachers to then check which new ideas are working best. You can help them by talking to your teachers about what is working well.

Thank you for making the short time we were with you pleasant and rewarding. We wish you all well for the future.