

Pope Pius X Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106962
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	309275
Inspection date	28 September 2007
Reporting inspector	John Young 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	679
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Dainty
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Winfield
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2003
School address	Wath Wood Road Wath-upon-Deerne Rotherham South Yorkshire S63 7PQ
Telephone number	01709 767900
Fax number	01709 875106

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement of students and the progress they make, particularly in Key Stage 3, and amongst the more able students; the impact of leadership and management on addressing areas for improvement from the last inspection; the curriculum, students' personal development, well-being, and their care, guidance and support. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes, observation of the school at work, interviews with members of staff, students and governors, and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work, including the impact of the school's newly acquired specialist status, the work of the internal exclusion unit, and the partnerships the school has established to maximise opportunities for its students, were not investigated in detail. However, the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school draws students from a wide area, including Rotherham, Doncaster, and Barnsley. Some of these areas contain pockets of significant social and economic deprivation, although the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The school's student population is predominantly of White British heritage and the remainder are from a range of minority and mixed ethnic backgrounds. Very few students are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. Students' standards are currently broadly average on entry. The school gained specialist Humanities status in September 2007, and has Investors in People accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school provides good value for money. It has taken a number of effective steps to improve itself since its last inspection. The school has a strong Christian ethos and is popular, with more requests for places than it can accommodate. The headteacher, who has excellent interpersonal skills, has been very successful in rallying the support of staff and helping them to recognise what they and the students are truly capable of. Morale is high and there is a strong sense of collective responsibility. A coherent improvement strategy has been the cornerstone of a systematic reorganisation of the way the school operates. This has brought about progress in almost every aspect of the school's work. Equally important has been the culture shift, with an emphasis on empowering staff, and giving them more autonomy. The school's improved use of monitoring, evaluation and assessment to support learning is bearing fruit. The school's specialist status has only just become operational. However, the specialist subjects are amongst the highest performing areas in the school and have begun to model best practice in a number of areas. In addition, the heads of specialist subjects are designated 'lead learners' in the school and have been trained to coach and mentor staff, including new middle leaders.

Students' achievement is good, when set against their standards at entry, which were below average. Following disappointing results at Key Stage 3 in 2006 in all subjects, the 2007 results were more positive. Students' standards in English and science were above average, while they were below average in mathematics. However, the school did not meet any of its subject targets for the proportion of students reaching the highest levels. At Key Stage 4 in 2006, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to G grades and five or more A* to C grades including mathematics and English was higher than the national average. Data which tracks students' progress throughout their time at school showed that they made significantly above average progress in 2006. Provisional results for 2007 show some slippage, although performance is broadly in line with national averages. Results in mathematics were particularly disappointing, as was the proportion of more able students achieving the highest grades. Nevertheless, the gap between girls' and boys' standards closed, and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made progress in line with their peers.

The school is having a good impact on developing students' personal development and well-being and in educating them about their rights and responsibilities. Students say they really enjoy coming to school, feel safe and take an active role in school life. They readily adopt leadership roles as prefects, serve on the school council, and mentor younger students. There is good promotion of healthy lifestyles through an integrated personal social, health, and citizenship programme, which complements provision in science and physical education. In addition, the school has ensured food served in the canteen meets national food standards. Students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also reflected in the positive contributions they make to the school and local community, including undertaking charity work and embarking on religious retreats and residential experiences. Students develop positive relationships with their peers and staff, are well behaved and attend regularly. The school prepares students well for life beyond school and this is reflected in the very high proportion of students who go on to further education, employment, or training.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although some teaching is excellent, there is a gulf between the best and least effective practice in the school. Evidence from lessons seen and the school's own monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning confirm that in the

best lessons students make rapid progress, because the teaching is highly focused, well planned, engaging, and challenging. Staff use monitoring and evaluation data intelligently to match the degree of challenge to students' capabilities, and raise students' awareness of their targets and how to improve further. Teachers positively reinforce the efforts of students, who in turn have high aspirations for themselves. Learning mentors and teaching assistants are used effectively to support students' learning, particularly vulnerable students and those with additional needs. However, despite the early developments evident through the specialist subjects, there are missed opportunities to share best practice and remove the inconsistencies that exist in the quality of teaching and learning, lesson planning, and marking within the school. A minority of students arrive late to lessons following break, and this can disrupt the start to lessons and rob staff of valuable teaching time.

Curricular provision is good. In recent years, it has evolved to better suit the needs and interests of all students. This is particularly true of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, which features a pathways model. It provides a balance between traditionally academic, vocational, and work-based learning opportunities. All students undertake work experience. The 'Pathfinder' option allows more vulnerable students to access a mix of literacy, numeracy and basic skills accreditation, with extended work experience placements in the local community. A collaborative agreement amongst a group of local schools has expanded what the school is able to offer to students. There are good enrichment opportunities for students, including residential activities, religious retreats, study clubs, and an award-winning choir. In addition, students participate in sport, foreign exchange visits, and drama activities. Students who are more able benefit from fast tracking, which allows them to take their exams a year early. A range of business and enterprise activities are organised through the school's good links with local partners. Students receive good quality careers advice, support, and guidance.

The quality of care, guidance, and support provided to students is good. This caring school works proactively with a range of partners to support the development of all the students. Child protection procedures are robust and appropriate risk assessments are undertaken. Staff know the students very well and this helps them to nurture strong relationships with students, who feel secure in the school. Students value the school's caring ethos and act responsibly; as a result, rates of exclusion are very low. In extreme cases, an internal exclusion room is used. Here, students are given time to reflect on their actions before being reintegrated back into normal classes. Academic and pastoral guidance are strong overall and academic mentoring and pastoral structures are well established. Students benefit from clear and consistent arrangements to assess, track, and re-evaluate targets based upon effective use of the available data. Transition arrangements as students enter and move through and beyond the school are effective. Students receive high quality guidance and support both from staff and a range of external agencies, and consequently make good progress. The school makes consistent efforts to engage and work with parents and carers, in order to improve parents' and carers' ability to support their child's learning and development.

The headteacher has systematically built a team of highly effective leaders and managers at all levels of the school. They work well together and have complementary skills. She has provided very clear educational direction. A coherent monitoring and evaluation system is helping the school to improve. It has not become complacent with its success and is constantly assessing and refining its practice; this has ensured that there is very good capacity across the school to continue to improve further. It is very aware of its strengths and areas for development, and has a well-conceived improvement plan to improve the overall quality of provision. The school has successfully addressed areas for development highlighted by the last inspection. Good

progress has been made in developing the quality of accommodation, and achievement has been raised, while unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated. The school works effectively with a host of partners to boost the quality of education it provides to students. Although most parents are very positive about the school, some are concerned that the school does not seek or consider their views enough. Governors are supportive of the school but can also pose challenging questions. They discharge their duties well and hold the school to account.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement, particularly in mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4, and amongst the most able students.
- Remove the inconsistencies that exist in the quality of teaching and learning, planning and marking across the school.
- Improve parental perceptions of the extent to which the school seeks and takes account of their views.

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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?	2
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
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	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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
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

Inspection of Saint Pius X Catholic High School, Rotherham, S63 7PQ

Thank you for talking to me and making me so welcome during my recent inspection visit. I saw some of your lessons, spoke to some of you, looked at your work, and read the results of questionnaires completed by you and your parents/carers. They proved to be very helpful.

Here is a summary of my main findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

- The quality of education you receive is good. Most of you make good progress relative to your attainment on entry to the school. Standards are average overall, although the results recently attained in English and science at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. You are set realistic and challenging targets. Nevertheless, there is room for further improvement in a number of key areas.
- You enjoy coming to school, are well behaved, and attend regularly, although some of you do not arrive punctually to your lessons. Some of the teaching you receive is excellent and in these lessons, you make outstanding progress. However, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning, lesson planning and marking to make it good overall and I have asked the school to tackle this.
- The curriculum is good and is supplemented by a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme. Your personal development is good. You take leadership roles and involve yourselves selflessly in the school and wider community. You are learning skills that equip you well for life beyond the school, and the majority of students have gone on to further education, employment, or training. Most of you feel safe and know who to turn to if you have any concerns. The academic and pastoral guidance you receive is good, and you value the school's caring ethos.

I have asked the school to raise your achievement: particularly in mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4, and amongst those of you who are the most able. I have also asked that staff work to remove the inconsistencies that exist in the quality of teaching and learning, planning and marking. In addition, the school needs to improve parental perceptions of the extent to which it seeks and takes account of their views.

I hope you will support staff in their efforts to bring about these improvements.