

St Katherine's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109317
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	309959
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Sanderson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	997
6th form	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alice O'Leary
Headteacher	Stephanie Quayle
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2005
School address	Pill Road Pill Bristol BS20 0HU
Telephone number	01275 373737
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Katherine's is an average-sized secondary school situated on the western edge of the City of Bristol. Around four fifths of its students come from Bristol and one fifth from surrounding rural areas. Most students are of White British heritage and the number of students whose first language is not English is well below the national average. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances, but overall, their socio-economic circumstances are average. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is just below average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The school has a resource base for 18 students with physical disabilities. There are currently six students on roll. The school became a science college in 2003 with a particular focus on the environment and sustainable energy.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Katherine's is an inclusive school that provides students with a good education, both in the main school and in the sixth form. The headteacher has maintained a clear focus on raising standards and achievement by improving teaching and providing all students with the support they need to succeed. She is supported well in this endeavour by a recently established leadership team. The standards reached by students at the end of Year 11 rose in 2007 to national average levels. Standards are due to rise again this year and the progress of students through the school is good. This rise in standards is due to improvements in teaching and learning, raised expectations of students' progress and effective use of the school's line management structure to hold middle managers more accountable for students' achievement. Expectations in the school have been raised through the setting of more challenging targets. Students are aware of their targets and how well they are doing. However, they are not always clear about what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Teaching and learning are good, although variable in quality across the school. Most lessons contain interesting activities that are pitched at the right level for students so that they are engaged and challenged. However, this is not the case in all lessons. An important strength of the school is the excellent support it provides for vulnerable students. The recently established Student and Family Support Centre is a model of good practice in the way it integrates the work of a wide range of professionals to support students and families. Students with physical disabilities make outstanding progress in their learning due to the excellent support they receive. Students say they feel safe in school and that incidents of bullying are rare. When they do occur, students report that staff deal with the issues quickly and effectively. The personal development of students is good, and is particularly strong in the sixth form in response to excellent support and guidance. Students behave well both in lessons and around the school. Students understand their rights and responsibilities and appreciate the fact that staff listen to and respond to their views and opinions. The number of fixed-term exclusions is high but they are being effectively reduced. The school has improved attendance and it is now at an average level. Students have an excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. A good and developing curriculum provides well for students' needs. The school has recently extended the range of vocational courses offered in Years 10 and 11. These courses are playing an important part in raising students' enjoyment of learning and their achievement. The school's specialist status in science is making a positive contribution to school improvement. Science accommodation has been improved and resources for information and communication technology across the school have been enhanced. Students and staff use these resources well to promote learning. Students' knowledge and understanding of sustainable energy and environmental issues have been effectively raised by the school's wide-ranging work in this area. The school has addressed the issues raised in the last inspection report well and standards are rising at the end of Year 11. Procedures for self-evaluation involve a range of stakeholders and the leadership team and governors are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school's development plan addresses well those areas in need of improvement, and the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students enjoy their time in the sixth form. They point to good teaching, security, close friendships and effective guidance among reasons for staying on. Very few students fail to

complete the courses they start. Standards are broadly average and the achievement of students is good. The good progress made by students is a result of the good teaching they receive. Students take pride in their work and are effective, independent learners. Leadership of the sixth form is good and is instrumental in developing opportunities and moving the sixth form forward despite its small size. Tutors and subject teachers monitor students' progress effectively and they are provided with outstanding support and guidance. Almost all students applying to university get their first choice. Many sixth formers contribute to the school community by acting as mentors for younger students. They also take the opportunity to involve themselves in enrichment activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, rag week and Fair Trade events. All these activities have a positive impact on their excellent personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Reduce the variation in teaching and learning by increasing the percentage of lessons that are good or better.
- Ensure that all students are clear about what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards at the end of Year 9 were similar to the national average in mathematics and science in 2007. However, standards in English fell to below the national average. This was mainly due to a fall in the percentage of students achieving the higher levels in this subject. The English department has taken effective action to address this issue and Year 9 standards in this subject have returned to national average levels. The achievement of students in English, mathematics and science between Years 7 and 9 is good. Standards at the end of Year 11 rose in 2007. The percentage of students achieving 5+ A*-C grades was similar to the national average. The school also achieved its specialist school target in science. However, the percentage of students obtaining 5+ A*-C grades including English and mathematics was below average. The senior leadership team has rightly focused on raising standards in these core subjects. Due to improved teaching and learning and better support provided to students who are underachieving, standards are rising in these subjects. The school's robust tracking system also indicates that overall standards are due to rise again in 2008. Given their attainment at the start of Year 7, students are now making good progress in their learning between Years 7 and 11. Boys and girls and those students from minority ethnic groups make similarly good progress. Those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress in their learning. However, there is some variation in the progress made by the different groups of these students. For example, students with physical disabilities make outstanding progress, those with specific learning difficulties make good progress while those with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties make satisfactory progress. The standards attained by students choosing to enter the sixth form are below the national average. Standards at the end of Years 12 and 13 vary from year to year due to the relatively small number of students in these year groups. However, they are broadly in line with the national average. Students make good progress in their learning in Years 12 and 13.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students at St Katherine's are confident, articulate and thoughtful young people who show pride in their school and respect for one another. One student commented, 'I can't imagine a better place to grow up.' Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students pay particular regard to their environment, helping to reduce waste, creating an eco garden and working towards the Eco-Schools award. Their adoption of a healthy lifestyle is outstanding. They participate in high numbers in the varied and challenging sporting opportunities offered them. They have also been active partners in the school's relentless drive to improve school meals. The school is a safe and orderly community and students respond positively to advice and education, sometimes from well trained peers, about drugs, alcohol and healthy relationships. Students can express their strong opinions and effect change through the school and year councils. They have been involved in the selection of staff, chosen school uniform and ensured the reward system is used throughout the school. Students serve the school community well. Older students act as mentors, peer educators and junior sports leaders. However, there are limited opportunities for students to engage in the diverse multicultural life of Bristol.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are planned well around clear learning outcomes for students. The large majority of students have good attitudes to learning, relate well to teachers and appreciate the opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners. Most lessons contain interesting activities that engage students and actively involve them in learning. However, very occasionally, learning slows because of low-level disruption by a small minority where lesson activities fail to interest and engage them. Learning objectives are routinely shared with students at the start of lessons and in best practice they are revisited during the lesson to assess how well students are achieving. Lesson summary sessions are good, enabling students to confirm the progress they have made. Most lessons contain activities pitched at the right level for students in the class. However, in a few lessons, work is not always demanding enough. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on informing and guiding students about progress. Students know how well they are achieving against national standards. Some marking is very good and clearly informs students about what they need to do to improve their work. However, the quality of marking is variable across the school and so students are not always clear about what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is regularly reviewed and developed. This ensures that it meets the needs and interests of students well. The school is willing to be innovative, as shown by the recent decision to take Key Stage 3 tests in science at the end of Year 8 from 2009. Curricular pathways from

Key Stage 4 into the sixth form are now well established. Students are able to follow both academic and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and continue similar courses at a higher level in the sixth form. Much of the recent development has gone into the introduction of vocational BTEC courses into Years 10 and 11. These courses, which will be examined for the first time in July 2008, are playing an important part in raising students' achievement. Students' enjoyment of these courses is reflected in the increasing numbers choosing to follow them. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) has been effectively developed since the last inspection and provision is now good. Citizenship education is identified within the PSHE programme; however, assessing and reporting students' progress is only at an early stage of development. The school provides a wide and varied range of activities within its enrichment programme. A large number of students take part in these activities and this makes a positive contribution to their good personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students and parents are understandably appreciative of the high quality care and support that they receive. As one parent commented about her son, 'Having happily settled in, he has gone from strength to strength and forged good relationships with teachers, staff and other students.' This care starts with very careful preparations to ensure a smooth transition to the school and continues until they are guided well into the world of work or further education. Systems are in place to ensure students are known well by a number of staff. Academic and personal targets are set and reviewed regularly. This ensures that students are well aware of their targets and how well they are doing. However, they are less clear about the specific actions they need to take to improve their learning. Safeguarding procedures, including those relating to child protection, are robust and rigorous. Risk assessments are effectively carried out. A significant strength of the school is the outstanding provision made for vulnerable students. The Family and Student Support Centre brings together on a weekly basis a number of agencies, including therapists, medical practitioners, the educational psychologist, teachers and parents. As a result, action can be taken rapidly to meet the often complex needs of students, including those with physical disabilities. The centre is already having some success in its initial aim to reduce exclusions. This, plus better targeted support, is beginning to have an impact on raising the achievement of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Accommodation in the resource base for physically disabled students, to allow for therapies and physical care where necessary, is excellent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the development of the school. In this, she is ably supported by senior colleagues and together they are generating a cohesive, happy and inclusive school. The school provides a caring and supportive environment in which students thrive and achieve well. The headteacher has led a number of important initiatives to improve students' performance, including developing the expertise of middle managers. Improved systems of self-evaluation have led to a clearer focus on the quality of teaching and learning and students'

achievement. These systems are beginning to have a positive impact on reducing the variation in achievement between subjects and raising standards. However, the full impact of this work is yet to be seen. The headteacher and business manager have been particularly effective and successful in managing an inherited deficit budget. They have alleviated this, while at the same time ensuring that the curriculum and opportunities for students have been protected. The governors have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their monitoring procedures are good and they provide effective support and challenge.

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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	3	3
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	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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?	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?	2	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	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	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

- 2 May 2008 Dear Students Inspection of St Katherine's School, Ham Green, BS20 OHU Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school recently. We met and talked with many of you, sat in some of your lessons and looked at work that you had done. Now that we have finished the inspection we wanted to let you know our findings. We thought your school provides you with a good education. The following points are what we found to be the school's key strengths:
 - Your headteacher wants the very best for all of you. She has made some important improvements to the school and she has good plans to make it even better.
 - You are taught well and make good progress in your learning in the main school and in the sixth form.
 - The Student and Family Support Centre provides those of you who need some extra help from time to time with excellent support.
 - Those of you with physical disabilities are provided with excellent support and make outstanding progress in your learning.
 - The school is a safe and orderly community. You behave well and have good relationships with teachers.
 - You have an excellent knowledge and understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle.
 - A good range of both academic and vocational courses is offered to you in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Although your school is good, it could become even better and we have identified two areas for improvement:
 - Many of your lessons contain interesting activities that are pitched at the right level for you so that you are both engaged and challenged. We have asked senior teachers in the school to ensure that all of your lessons are like this.
 - We have asked the school to ensure that you are all clear about exactly what you have to do to improve your grades or levels. I wish you well and look forward to hearing good things about you all in the future. Yours sincerely Peter Sanderson Her Majesty's Inspector

2 May 2008

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- The Student and Family Support Centre provides those of you who need some extra help from time to time with excellent support.
- Those of you with physical disabilities are provided with excellent support and make outstanding progress in your learning.
- The school is a safe and orderly community. You behave well and have good relationships with teachers.
- You have an excellent knowledge and understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- A good range of both academic and vocational courses is offered to you in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.

Although your school is good, it could become even better and we have identified two areas for improvement:

- Many of your lessons contain interesting activities that are pitched at the right level for you so that you are both engaged and challenged. We have asked senior teachers in the school to ensure that all of your lessons are like this.
- We have asked the school to ensure that you are all clear about exactly what you have to do to improve your grades or levels.

I wish you well and look forward to hearing good things about you all in the future.

Yours sincerely
Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector