

All Hallows Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119802
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313427
Inspection date	25 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins 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	900
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Perry
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Riding
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2005
School address	Crabtree Avenue Penwortham Preston Lancashire PR1 0LN
Telephone number	01772 746121
Fax number	01772 740141

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, curriculum, guidance and support and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, achievement data, meetings with students and the school's monitoring documents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found evidence to support the school's own judgements about its provision and these have been included in the report where appropriate.

Description of the school

All Hallows Catholic High School is an oversubscribed medium-sized school located in the Penwortham district to the south of Preston, in the Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool. Students come from a range of social and economic circumstances although the immediate area has relatively low levels of deprivation. It has a slightly higher than average proportion of girls to boys. Most students enter the school with above average levels of attainment. A very small proportion of students are eligible for free school meals and very few have learning difficulties. The students are predominantly White British with a small number of students from other minority ethnic backgrounds. Students' attendance is higher than similar schools with a lower than average number of authorised and unauthorised absences. All Hallows remains a leading member of the South Ribble Learning Federation and is a designated Leading Edge School following the receipt of a School Achievement Award in three successive years. In addition to its specialist status for technology, the school gained specialist status for languages in April 2006. The school achieved 'Healthy Schools' status in 2007 and is also a 'Fairtrade' School. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Christian values and concern for others are at the heart of its work. All who work in the school are genuinely committed to equality of opportunity for every young person. It has successfully retained its reputation locally for providing high quality education.

All Hallows is particularly successful at engaging its students in all aspects of the school community and raising their future aspirations. Students leave the school with the skills and qualities to prepare them well for the next stage of their education and for future employment. The vast majority of parents and students speak highly of the school and one Year 11 parent wrote, 'My child has enjoyed every minute of his learning at All Hallows. He refers to his teachers as 'awesome', a great accolade from a 15 year old boy!'

Most students enter the school with above average levels of attainment. The standards reached by students by the end of Year 11 are significantly above average and their achievement is outstanding. In 2007, 80% of students achieved five or more A* to C grades at GCSE – considerably higher than the national average, with a high proportion gaining A* and A grades within their subjects. The development of students' basic skills is excellent, particularly the ability to communicate in a range of contexts and to use number in problem-solving. Many students demonstrate a high level of independent thinking and expression. The majority of students make excellent academic progress throughout their time at school, notably through Years 7 to 9. No one group of students underperforms because teaching is consistently strong. Inspectors found the school's self-evaluation underestimated the quality of its teaching and learning and raised this grade to outstanding. Teachers' comprehensive subject knowledge and challenging use of questions enable students to reflect effectively and speak at length about their work. Lessons are carefully planned to include a variety of learning activities which enable students to think for themselves and find their own solutions to problems. Their learning is effectively enhanced through the excellent relationships that exist between teachers and their students, and between students and their peers. This, along with a stimulating learning environment means students have a desire to learn and achieve the best they can. Students' work is regularly assessed and they are very clear about what they can do to improve further. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well taught and supported. Subsequently, they make outstanding progress particularly in developing essential independent life skills.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding because they are self-confident young people and attain high standards. They are able to work independently and collaboratively, and can sustain their concentration over long periods. Students say that they like attending school and thoroughly enjoy their work. They eat healthy lunches and take regular exercise. Attendance rates are above average. Behaviour is excellent and students report that rare instances of bullying or intimidation are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students gain in maturity because they undertake a range of responsibilities in school. They show their concern for others less fortunate than themselves through their fundraising and charitable activities in the local community. They know right from wrong and have a highly developed sense of fair play and justice. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. There is a good and improving curriculum to meet the needs of all students. The school's specialist status as a language and technology college has broadened the curriculum and improved the quality and range of learning resources. There are excellent links with primary schools to ensure

continuity in curriculum provision. Students benefit greatly from an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, from visits out of school and from visiting speakers. The most gifted linguists, for example, have attended Mandarin lessons organised by the university. Academically demanding courses are followed by the majority of students but equally challenging vocational pathways are available as an alternative. All students have experience of work-related learning in the curriculum. There is discrete provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7, 8 and 9 and cross-curricular provision in Years 10 and 11. The school is looking to improve on this for the older students by ensuring consistency of provision for every student.

Students receive outstanding care, guidance and support and are given every encouragement to broaden their educational experiences beyond the classroom. Many, for example, undertake their work experience abroad. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and robustly, particularly when planning for visits out of school. Effective systems are in place to track students' progress over time and to provide support when weaknesses are uncovered. Students say that there is always someone to turn to if they have worries and that they are known and valued as individuals. They particularly appreciate it when staff recognise and praise their achievements, no matter how modest. Exceptional care is afforded to vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school is very well led. The dynamic headteacher, along with senior managers, has continued to build on the school's strengths with an increased strategic focus in planning for the future. In a relatively short period of time, improvements have been made to the curriculum, guidance programme, and the already excellent partnership arrangements have been strengthened. In addition, an extensive building programme has been very well managed, culminating in greatly improved facilities for learning. The headteacher's enthusiasm and drive are infectious and morale is high because staff and students have confidence in his open and approachable leadership style. Senior managers' continuous process of review ensures there is no complacency in this high achieving school. As a result, the vast majority of ambitious performance targets were met or exceeded in the last academic year. The governing body are highly supportive of the school and the chair of governors works closely with the headteacher to monitor the school's performance. Self-evaluation is good. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths in terms of students' academic performance. Aspects of provision are understated, however. For example, the school is not evaluating the quality of teaching and learning with sufficient rigour to consistently identify and share the excellent practice which exists. The school has this as a priority area for development. The consistently high pupil performance, strong teaching and leadership demonstrate that this school has an excellent capacity to improve its provision further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by ensuring that strengths, for example, in teaching and learning, are identified and shared consistently through rigorous and accurate self-evaluation.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	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?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

26 September 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of All Hallows Catholic High School, Lancashire, PR1 0LN.

I would like to begin by thanking you all for welcoming my colleague and me to your school on the 25 September. We were immediately impressed by your behaviour, courtesy and smart appearance. During the day we spent at your school we visited your lessons, met with a number of you and talked at length to various members of school staff. This letter aims to outline to you our findings from the day.

We found your school to be outstanding in nearly all areas. Your standards of work are very high and many of you leave with excellent GCSE grades. You develop a firm understanding of mathematics and English which prepares you well for life after school. From Year 7 onwards you make very good progress in lessons through to Year 11. We agreed with you that the vast majority of teaching is challenging and interesting. We also agreed that your school provides a very high quality of guidance and support, which you value. Your curriculum is good and improving. The recent changes to accommodation and the increase in ICT facilities have significantly improved the environment in which you learn. The school is working hard to ensure all of you access the computers available on a regular basis to further develop your skills in information technology.

Your headteacher is doing a great job in moving your school forward. We found that your school knows its students well and knows what it does very well and what it can do to make things better for you. However, in one or two cases the school did not celebrate the quality of some of its work as well as it could do. Therefore one key area for the school to improve upon is to identify and celebrate more thoroughly areas of excellent practice, such as some of the very best teaching you receive, and share this more consistently across the school.

You can of course help maintain your school's outstanding status by continuing to work as hard as you can to achieve your best. Also, continue to share your views through your school council. This way, managers will know what you think the school does well or what you think it needs to improve further.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and we would like to wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins, HMI