

St Wilfrid's C of E High School and Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119815
Local Authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	313430
Inspection date	3 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Angela Milner 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1260
6th form	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Matthew Grant
Headteacher	Mr David A S Whyte
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2004
School address	Duckworth Street Blackburn Lancashire BB2 2JR
Telephone number	01254 604000
Fax number	01254 604004

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, student's personal development and well-being, the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum, the overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the effectiveness of managers in improving education and care for the students.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form (SEF); national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; a range of school documentation; observations of the school at work; scrutiny of student work; a joint lesson observation; discussions with staff, students, the chair of governors and the school improvement officer; and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but there is no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluations, as given in its SEF, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Wilfrid's C of E High School is a larger than average school. It serves a wide geographical area with varied levels of social and economic deprivation. The majority of students are of White British background. The minority of students are from Asian heritage backgrounds. Fewer than average students have English as an additional language. The number of students eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The proportion of students with a statement of educational need is slightly higher than that found nationally. Eleven students are in public care. The school has been a specialist technology college since September 1997. It has achieved Healthy Schools Status, the Bronze Sportsmark award, the Basic Skills Quality Award, the Careers Guidance Quality Award and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St. Wilfrid's School is a good school with outstanding features. It provides high quality education and care in a safe and inclusive learning environment. Students and staff feel valued; they enjoy and appreciate what the school has to offer. The excellent care is reflected in the respectful and friendly relationships which exist between teachers, support staff and students. This results in a harmonious school community where students are confident and can achieve. Students benefit from an extremely strong system of coordinated pastoral and academic support focused on student achievement. Those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well cared for. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive in their views of all aspects of the school. A few would like to see communication between school and parents further improved. Students are proud of their school, the support they receive and the opportunities it provides.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a substantial strength and contributes to the distinct sense of community within the school. Students become mature and self-confident young people. They appreciate the good opportunities provided for them to become increasingly independent, for example, through the flourishing Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Students take responsibility readily and contribute to the life of the school and its wider community. They feel their opinions are valued and play an active role in the life of the school through the work of the school council. Students are very well supported for the world of work and benefit substantially from an excellent personal, social, careers and health education (PSCHE) programme that includes imaginative use of whole school theme days. Students commented positively on the willingness of teachers to give them help when they need it. Students' behaviour is excellent both in and out of lessons. They enjoy school, participate in the life of the community and their attendance is above the national average. As a result, students develop very positive attitudes to learning. The school pays excellent attention to ensuring students' well-being and works extremely effectively with a range of external specialist services and partners to achieve this.

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Students enter the school in Year 7 with above average attainment. Standards are above average at the end of both key stages. Students make good progress overall. Standards have been improving for a number of years. In 2007 the proportion of students achieving Level 5, the standard expected for their age, was 96% in English, 94% in mathematics and 93% in science. A significant number of students gained a Level 6 or Level 7 in mathematics and science. In 2007, the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was 71% and five or more A* to G grades was 100%. All students left the school with at least one GCSE qualification in 2007. Effective learning support ensures that students with special educational needs achieve well. In the relentless drive to continue to improve standards further the school sets challenging targets linked to high expectations and self-improvement. Rigorous data analysis takes place to identify any underachievement and a number of effective intervention strategies are used to boost achievement.

Teaching and learning are good. The school has put teaching and learning at the heart of their drive for school improvement and worked hard to raise the quality of teaching across the school. This ensures that effective teaching results in effective learning. The sharing of best practice is promoted through a carefully planned and well-attended continuous professional development (CPD) programme for staff. School records indicate that unsatisfactory teaching has been

eradicated, and that the vast majority of teaching is now good or outstanding. Visits to lessons during the inspection reinforced the accuracy of the school's judgement on the quality of teaching. The school is focusing its efforts on ensuring greater consistency in teaching, learning and assessment across all subjects. Although the setting of targets and assessment procedures are good, there is some variation in the quality of marking between subjects. Students know their current levels and targets, but feedback from teachers does not always inform them exactly how to improve their work.

The curriculum offered is broad and well matched to the needs of students. Provision in Years 10 and 11 is dynamic and evolving with a wide range of GCSE courses supplemented by a number of applied and vocational options to provide a flexible and personalised curriculum, is outstanding. This provision captures the students' interests, develops important work-related skills and has been effective in raising aspirations and achievement. The majority of students also benefit from the extensive range of extra-curricular and inter house activities.

Technology college status permeates the life of the school and has been used very effectively to move the school forward. Specialist status has been used well to improve facilities and equipment. Challenging targets have been met and high standards achieved in mathematics and science. The school's work with a range of external partners in design and technology and engineering has raised the profile of the school locally and nationally.

The quality of leadership and management is good with outstanding features. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and a safe, secure and caring inclusive learning atmosphere, in line with the school's Anglican ethos, has been created. The school is very well led and managed by a headteacher and leadership team who provide a clear vision for the school focused on enabling all students to achieve their full potential and a relentless drive for self improvement. Improvements seen in accommodation and resources, the quality of teaching and learning and the progress made by students are a direct result of this effective leadership. This positive focus on improving the school and raising achievement is shared by the whole school community. Highly effective systems of self-evaluation and the setting of clear targets for development mean that the school knows what has been achieved and what it can do to improve further. Senior managers have an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, based on thorough analysis of data, lesson observations and student and parental surveys. The school takes the tracking and monitoring of students' progress very seriously. Leadership and management of subjects has been strengthened and greater responsibility given to middle leaders to evaluate provision and plan for developments. Middle leaders are playing a key role in raising achievement and standards. Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school; provide good support and appropriate challenge. All areas identified for improvement in the last inspection have been effectively addressed and the school clearly demonstrates excellent capacity to make further improvements.

The school meets all the requirements for safeguarding and has clear policies and procedures in relation to equality and discrimination.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

This is a popular and growing sixth form which provides a good quality of education. Students and parents are pleased with the education and care provided. Students are well supported when they enter the sixth form, during their studies and as they prepare for transition to higher education. Good pastoral and academic tracking systems enable student progress to be

monitored effectively. The school offers a broad range of subjects at AS and A2 level and a small number of Level 1 and 2 qualifications. There is significant variation in the numbers of A and B grades attained in different subjects at advanced level. The school is working hard to reduce underachievement and to provide effective careers guidance for those who will not be moving on to university. Student progress and retention rates are good as a result of effective teaching, the quality of sixth form management and the levels of support and academic guidance provided. Students are well supported to develop skills for learning and future student life, through a series of well planned theme days, which are run in conjunction with a range of external agencies. Students take part in an extensive variety of highly valued extra-curricular and enrichment activities, which help them to develop skills to support their future lives beyond school. Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Sixth form students make a significant contribution to the life of the school and the wider community through the house system and their work on school council and act as role models for younger students in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency in the quality of marking so that students know exactly what to do in order to improve their work in all subjects.

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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	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
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?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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	2
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	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	1	
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

4 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of St Wilfrid's C of E High School and Technology College, Blackburn with Darwen, BB2 2JR

Thank you for the contribution you made to the recent inspection of your school. You made the inspection team feel welcome and we enjoyed visiting your school and talking with many of you and your teachers. We were impressed by your ability to work hard and achieve good test and examination results and how proud you are to be part of the St Wilfrid's school community. Many of your parents completed questionnaires. This meant we were able to consider their views during the inspection.

We think that that there are many good things about your school and that it is providing you with high quality education and care. There are excellent relationships between yourselves and members of staff in the school. You behave well, enjoy your time in school and make good progress in your learning. You are effectively taught and the school provides opportunities for you to develop as citizens and become prepared for your life beyond school. The school and sixth form are very well led and managed and your headteacher, governors and teachers have worked very hard to improve the school since the last inspection. Whilst we have judged your school to be good with outstanding features there is one area that we have asked the school to improve further. We would like the school to:

- ensure marking helps you to understand exactly what you have to do in order to improve your work.

You can all, of course, help to improve your school further by continuing to work as hard as you can to achieve your best and by continuing to share your views about the school with the staff.

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.

Yours sincerely

Angela Milner

Her Majesty's Inspector