

Leyland St Mary's Catholic Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119816
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313431
Inspection date	29 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth James 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	783
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Christopher Raven
Headteacher	Mr Trevor Day
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2005
School address	Royal Avenue Leyland Lancashire PR25 1BS
Telephone number	01772 421909
Fax number	01772 424705

Age group	11-16
Inspection date	29 January 2008
Inspection number	313431

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The following issues were investigated: achievement and standards, personal development, the quality of provision and leadership and management. The inspector gathered evidence from data, visits to lessons, documentation, meetings with school staff and students, and questionnaires completed by parents. Some aspects of the school's work, such as governance, were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments of these in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Mary's Catholic Technology College serves the town of Leyland and surrounding area. It has been a specialist technology college since 1996 and was redesignated in April 2007. The school has Investors in People status, the Healthy Schools award and the Sportsmark award. The vast majority of students are of white British heritage and very few speak a first language other than English. The proportion of students who have free school meals is lower than average. Slightly fewer students than average have learning difficulties and or disabilities, and the proportion with statements of special educational need is about average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Mary's is a good school with an outstanding curriculum.

Students say they are happy coming to the school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. They say there is very little bullying and any incidents are dealt with effectively. They value opportunities to contribute to the development of the school through the school council. Relationships with staff are good and students value the school's caring ethos. Students are well prepared for life beyond the school and this is reflected in the high proportion of students who go on to further education or training when they leave. Parents are generally very pleased with the school, although a small number have concerns.

Standards are above average and achievement is good. At Key Stage 3 students make good progress in English and mathematics, but their progress in science is slower. In the 2007 Key Stage 3 national tests almost 90% of students achieved at least the expected level in mathematics, and almost three quarters achieved a higher level. The proportion of students gaining five or more grades A*-C at GCSE is above average. In 2007 boys did particularly well. The proportion of boys gaining five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics was well above the national figure for boys; however, it was lower for girls. This was not the case in 2006. Progress in mathematics at Key Stage 4 is much slower than during Key Stage 3 and some students do not achieve as well as they should. Students do very well in many technology subjects including information and communications technology (ICT), electronic products, food technology and applied engineering. They also do well in art and design, business, English and French, but achievement in science is slightly below expectations. Results for resistant materials and graphic products are not as good as other technology subjects.

Personal development and well-being are good. Behaviour in lessons and around school is generally good. In lessons most students are engaged, interested and keen to do well but occasionally, where teaching fails to captivate interest, attention wanders and minor misbehaviour occurs. In 2006-07 exclusions were relatively high, particularly for younger students. Data for 2007-08 suggest this is reducing. Students make good contributions to the school community. The many extra-curricular sports activities encourage students to have healthy lifestyles, but in Key Stage 4 there is only one lesson of physical education for those who choose not to study the subject at GCSE.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use a wide range of activities to engage, involve and motivate students. Teachers' explanations are clear. Teachers have good information about individual students which they use to monitor progress against expected achievement. On occasion, teaching to the whole class means that individuals are left behind or fail to engage with set tasks. There are regular assessments which are marked with reference to individual targets. Increasingly students are becoming more involved in assessing their own learning. They know the grades or levels they are aiming for.

The curriculum is outstanding. Enrichment opportunities are rewarding for all ages and aptitudes, as high participation levels and students' enthusiastic responses make clear. Specialising in technology options in Year 9 benefits students by allowing them to develop their skills in areas of interest that they are likely to continue with in Key Stage 4. The introduction of new curriculum initiatives, such as 'Learn to learn', is encouraging students to become more independent learners. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been expanded to include an excellent range of vocational and academic courses. There are productive links with the local college

which provides additional vocational courses. Good arrangements for managing Key Stage 4 options ensure that almost all students receive their first choices.

Care, guidance and support are good. The pastoral system is strong, and links with external agencies are used effectively. Teaching assistants provide good support to individuals in lessons. Academic guidance is good, but has not yet succeeded in eradicating underachievement in all areas. Regular individual reviews help students to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and develop responsibility for their own learning. Students receive good advice and guidance on their Key Stage 4 options and post 16 choices.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides clear and effective leadership and, together with the senior leadership team, has successfully fostered a culture focused on enabling all to achieve their full potential. Specialist status has been used well to improve facilities and equipment. The use of ICT across the curriculum is developing, and many classrooms are equipped with electronic whiteboards which teachers make good use of. Challenging targets are set and many, but not all, are met. The school's own self-evaluation accurately judged the overall effectiveness of the school to be good, but in some other areas judgments were a little over-generous. There have been many improvements since the last inspection. The school development plan is appropriately focused on raising attainment further. It is thorough in detailing actions to be taken to achieve this, identifying those responsible and timescales. Progress with implementation is reported to governors, but not formally documented. Increasingly middle leaders are developing skills in evaluating provision in their own areas, and developing strategies to tackle weaknesses. Capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop strategies to raise achievement further, especially in mathematics and science.
- Further improve teaching and learning to ensure that all lessons meet the full range of individual needs.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	2
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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

30 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Leyland St Mary's Catholic Technology College, Lancashire,

PR25 1BS

Thank you very much for making me welcome when I inspected your school. I visited lessons, and talked to staff and students. You told me that you think yours is a good school and I agree. I also looked at the results of questionnaires sent in by your parents. Most of them are very pleased with the school.

I found that students at your school make good progress and generally get good results in examinations. In 2007, boys did better than girls in getting five or more GCSE A*-C grades including English and mathematics. Results in mathematics at Key Stage 3 are very good, but they are not as good at GCSE. You do particularly well in many technology subjects, and in art, English, business and French, but results in science are not quite as good.

Your behaviour in lessons and around school is usually good, and most of you have good attitudes to learning. Many of you take advantage of the very good opportunities to join in extra-curricular activities, especially sports. The school looks after you well and you told me there is very little bullying, and any incidents are tackled effectively.

Your teachers work hard to encourage you, to make lessons enjoyable and interesting and to explain things clearly. Occasionally a few of you do not pay as much attention as you should, when lessons do not interest you or you do not understand. The school offers you an excellent choice of courses at Key Stage 4, and specialising in technology in Year 9 helps you improve your skills in the areas that interest you most.

Although yours is a good school we found that some things could be even better. We have asked your headteacher and staff to look at ways to improve lessons even more, so that each one of you learns well. We have also asked him to work with the staff to look at other ways of getting even better results, especially in mathematics and science. You can help in this by paying attention in all your lessons, and asking if you do not understand something.

We are sure that you will keep up your good work and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James HMI