

# Saint Paul's Catholic School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120307
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leicester City
<b>Inspection number</b>	313582
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Richard Masterton

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	896
6th form	166
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Laura O'Brien
<b>Headteacher</b>	Francis Doherty
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Spencefield Lane Leicester LE5 6HN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01162 414057
<b>Fax number</b>	01162 419156

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<b>Age group</b>	11-18
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors. In addition to the general schedule for inspection, the team looked at how effectively the school is increasing the rate of progress of male students in literacy.

## Description of the school

St Paul's Catholic School is a mixed comprehensive school for students' aged 11 to 18 years situated in the eastern suburbs of Leicester. It is slightly larger than average with a total of 1,077 students' on roll who come from Roman Catholic parishes covering a wide area of the city and the surrounding countryside. A high proportion (over a third) of pupils' are from minority ethnic groups, and over a fifth speak English as an additional language. Standards on entry are average. An average proportion are on the special needs register. In 2003 the school became a shared specialist performing arts school in partnership with another school located in the western part of the city. The school works extensively with other schools in the district including the Leicester Islamic Academy.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Paul's Catholic School is a good school where students develop into informed, mature, responsible, sensitive and caring members of the community and they achieve well. The school is highly respected by both students and their parents'. Pupils are known as individuals, their potential is carefully evaluated and they are stretched both academically and in the expectation that they contribute to the community of which they are members. Students' benefit from and contribute to the strong Catholic ethos that underpins the school they are proud to attend. Little surprise then, that the school is greatly oversubscribed.

Good leadership and management are evident in all aspects of school work. The headteacher and senior managers strive unceasingly to identify how the school can improve. They empower and challenge all staff to work more effectively and to take responsibility for change. Rigorous measurement of performance against targets has driven improvements in achievement at every level. As a result students' achievement in the main school is good. Governors and senior managers work closely together. Each are cognisant of what the school must deliver. Governors' both challenge and support managers, and vital school development priorities are formed from the different perspectives of school leaders and community representatives. School self-evaluation comprehensively evaluates the quality of provision and precisely identifies what needs to change. It has produced rapidly rising standards in the main school and the beginning of improvement in the sixth form, and confirms the school's good capacity to improve.

The school offers a rich curriculum for students up to the age of 16. It is significantly enhanced through the specialist arts college status of the school giving all pupils the opportunity to develop their confidence, their power of expression and informed general awareness. The performing arts dimension stimulates powerfully students spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is outstanding. The wide range of very popular extra-curricular activities makes a significant contribution to students' development. They supplement taught provision, extend educational opportunities and lead to enjoyment in learning. The sixth form offers a satisfactory range of advanced level courses, but the school is limited by accommodation in satisfying the demand for more vocational courses.

Teaching is good in the main school. As a result, students enjoy school, work hard in class, behave responsibly, help one another and make good progress. Lessons are mostly well-planned with appropriately challenging work for students, but this is not consistent and in a minority of cases work is not adapted well enough to challenge the most able or support the lowest attainers. Teachers are generally confident in their subjects, but in the sixth form not all teaching stimulates students to work at the highest levels. Across the school, the quality of teachers' marking of students' work is inconsistent and does not always show students how to improve. Care of students is outstanding and the students themselves freely acknowledge this. Their progress is monitored against individual targets in all subjects and teachers are primed to intervene with individuals and groups where necessary. Students know what to do in order to improve, are challenged and encouraged by their teachers and have others to whom they can turn for advice and support. As a consequence, in the main school, all groups of students achieve well and achievement is satisfactory in the sixth form. Students are well prepared with the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) so essential for later life. Indeed, the development of students' literacy is given a very high priority in all subjects.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The sixth form is at a transition stage. Many of the improvements that have impacted positively on achievement in the main school have not yet delivered required improvement in the sixth form. However, the foundations needed are in place. A more rigorous system for tracking student progress has been introduced and through a robust line-management structure, middle managers take swift and effective action when it is needed. Students' personal development is excellent. Students participate in a wide range of fund raising and charity work, they have a high profile in the school and make a significant contribution to the Catholic ethos. Sixth form students work for their community as well as benefit from it and are excellent role models for younger students. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory but has not yet generated the rapid progress characteristic of the main school. It needs to offer a greater intellectual stimulus leading towards higher level thinking and the development of independent learning. A good range of A-level subjects is offered but there are limited vocationally related choices. Sixth form students benefit from outstanding advice and support. Students' progress in the sixth form is satisfactory and their examination standards are average.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers adapt work well enough in lessons to challenge the most able and support the learning of the lowest attainers.
- Ensure that students' work is consistently and informatively marked so that Students' know how they can improve.
- Improve achievement and curriculum provision in the sixth form.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 3

National tests of students' in Year 9 for 2007 show that standards in English and science are significantly above the national average. In mathematics, standards are average. A dip in general standards recorded the previous year has been rectified. GCSE standards also improved in 2007, and were significantly higher than the national average. Standards of general literacy are good, among boys as well as girls. Successful intervention and specialist programmes of learning mean that very few students leave school aged 16 years with poor literacy skills, so that even those with the weakest skills have been able to get into employment or work-related training programmes. The achievement of students in their first three years at school is exceptionally high, particularly in science. Good progress is sustained in Years 10 and 11 but some of the pace slows in mathematics. All groups of students do well including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. There are very few individual students who do not make at least satisfactory progress from Years 7 to 11. Students respond well to the demanding targets they are set and the guidance they receive.

A-level standards are average. Students do well in art, performing arts and religious studies. Having joined the sixth form with broadly average standards, students' progress in the sixth form is satisfactory except in psychology, computer studies and economics where examination performance is weaker.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students demonstrate very positive attitudes towards learning and greatly value and enjoy their education. Their spiritual development is nurtured within the Catholic school ethos that inspires powerful and meaningful reflection and is stimulated through many enrichment activities, which are often promoted and supported by local parishes. Students adopt a strong moral code and show respectful and considerate behaviour towards each other and to staff. Their social skills and development are excellent, promoting very positive and supportive relationships with their peers and staff. Students are very aware of other cultures and faiths through links with a local community school, a range of schools in Europe and India, and involvement in a project to help students in a school in Ghana. They have a good awareness of the cultural diversity of British society and work well in a community cohesion project with a partner school.

Students' good behaviour makes a significant contribution to the quality of learning in class. Students run an active school council and feel their voices are heard. They enthusiastically accept, and sometimes keenly compete for, posts of responsibility within the school and generally make an excellent contribution to the community. They are heavily involved in social and charitable activities. They are well prepared for their future economic well-being, taking up the many opportunities to train as mentors or First Aiders, becoming involved in enterprise activities, and learning life skills such as good teamwork.

Students have a good awareness of developing healthier lifestyles and are involved in promoting this within the school. A very high proportion of students voluntarily participate in extra-curricular sporting activities even though school transport arrangements restrict the times they can stay in school. Students are also well aware of the dangers of drug abuse and the need to adopt safe practices when working or in their other pursuits. Bullying is very rare, action is taken and students say they feel extremely safe at school.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The extremely good relationships between teachers and students are a strength. Lessons are mostly well planned, organised and managed. Teachers have high expectations of students' work and attitudes. They extend students' understanding well by appropriate use of ICT and effective questioning. Good support is provided for the development of literacy. The intensive literacy development programme for students requiring additional support is highly effective.

In most lessons learning proceeds at a brisk pace because of challenging teaching. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not ensure that the most able students have additional or alternative work that is more challenging with complex tasks and using additional resources. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support from teaching assistants, but teachers do not always receive good professional guidance to help students requiring additional support. Some comments on marked work are too vague to ensure students know exactly how the work might be improved. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is too variable. Some is good and characterised by excellent management of learning.

Pace and energy are matched by high levels of student participation, responding to questions with detailed and thoughtfully composed answers. By comparison and particularly in small teaching groups, students are often not sufficiently encouraged to think and reason for themselves and opportunities to engage in active learning and high quality debate are missed.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 meets legal requirements and is well suited to students' interests. It reflects the ethos of the school and its performing arts status. Extra-curricular school activities, visits, residential visits and performances make a significant contribution to students' development. They are very well attended and greatly enrich each student's experience. The school consults students carefully, using this information to inform planning of courses and options. Some students are carefully identified and given additional support for literacy, including some external provision.

The sixth form curriculum provides a range of A-level courses and the opportunity to improve GCSE grades. The number of vocational courses remains limited by the accommodation and there is no provision for some students who would wish to remain at school to follow a more work-related programme in the sixth form. Very effective liaison with local colleges enables these students to continue their studies elsewhere. Students may participate in a good range of extra-curricular courses, for example learning additional languages and working in the community.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students receive excellent individual care. Extensive transition and induction procedures ensure that all students settle and progress smoothly throughout their time in school. Strong links with other institutions from primary schools to universities, the curriculum, the enrichment programme and involvement with other agencies contribute significantly. Highly effective careers and university guidance helps students to make well informed choices about the future. There is a rich personal, social and health education programme which students value highly.

There is a very effective mentoring system for vulnerable students referred for mentoring. It is enhanced by many students from Year 10 who support Year 7 and the sixth form who support Year 11. Those students who are mentored speak highly of the help they receive. The residential and retreat programme, which is extensively supported by the local parishes, also supports and guides students. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who are gifted and talented, is good. The school works very closely with parents and successfully promotes equal opportunities. All students' are given individual targets that are challenging. Students know exactly how well they are doing at school and their progress with respect to target grades. They work hard to achieve them. All required safeguarding, child protection and risk assessment procedures and checks are fully in place, with health and safety being a very high priority for the school.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The headteacher leads the school energetically, striving for improvement and inspiring managers who identify strongly with the creation and implementation of development objectives. School evaluation expertly analyses strengths and weaknesses and is very self-critical. Governors participate wholeheartedly in the quest for excellence. They scrutinise carefully reports from the school, take first hand evidence themselves and play a full role in determining priorities through support and challenge. The result is a powerful coherence of approach that not only identifies successful solutions but also embeds them deeply into the work of the school. This coherence is exemplified in the way that the school has simplified and made more precise the process of setting students individual targets for all their subjects and tracking their progress. This has been a key driver for the improved achievement recorded by students. Another example is seen in the way that the performing arts specialist status of the school has been used to broaden the vocational curriculum, grow the outreach of the school into the community and nurture the personal development of all students, particularly their spiritual maturity. The majority of middle managers also work effectively delivering school improvement. Sixth form management and also that of mathematics is improving. Very careful financial management has enabled a substantial budget deficit to be eliminated since the last inspection. In the light of this, the improvements made to the quality of the school's provision represent excellent value for money.



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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	3
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	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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	1	
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	1	
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	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
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	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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	1	
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**

8 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of St Paul's Catholic School, Leicester LE5 6HN

My colleagues' and I greatly enjoyed our visit to your school. It was very interesting to see the work you undertake, to look at the standards you achieve and the quality of the education you receive. It was invaluable for us to meet you as you gave us some of the most important information that we needed for our work. Thank you for your politeness and assistance.

You attend a good school that is well led and managed. The staff provide outstanding care to ensure your good progress and excellent personal development. You are taught well, although we feel that sixth form students should be stretched intellectually more often. Your curriculum is enriched through the performing arts status of the school and the many extra-curricular activities. In the main school the curriculum is good but there are limited work-related courses available in the sixth form. We were greatly impressed by the way that you all enjoy contributing to life in school and are pleased to be at St Paul's. Your own many contributions to the life and work of your school mean that you are helping each other to succeed.

In our report we ask governors' and managers' to improve some aspects of teaching to ensure that your work is always informatively marked and that work in lessons is planned to match everyone's individual ability more closely. This should mean that there is support for those of you who work more slowly and really challenging work for others who like to race ahead.

Your relationship with teaching staff and managers' is one of mutual respect nurtured by the Christian ethos of your school. Please continue to work with the staff and play your part in advising them on the success of the measures they use to help you.

Yours sincerely

R Douglas Masterton Lead inspector



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Yours sincerely

R Douglas Masterton  
Lead inspector