

Paulet High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124391
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314915
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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	724
6th form	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wayne Goodwin
Headteacher	Alexander Timms
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2004
School address	Violet Way Stapenhill Burton-on-Trent DE15 9RT
Telephone number	01283 239710
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. During a one-day visit, the inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of the contribution made by assessment and guidance to the progress made by pupils; the impact of the curriculum on basic skills and aspects of personal development; and the effectiveness of the school's monitoring and evaluation.

The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, discussions with students and staff, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's documentation, parental questionnaires and national assessment data.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This smaller-than-average school makes joint sixth form provision with Blessed Robert Sutton Catholic Sports College at the Stapenhill Post-16 Centre. In 2006, the school became a specialist mathematics and computing college. Pupils are mainly drawn from the immediate area and an increasing number are coming from outside the school's catchment. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English but this number is increasing. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school was re-awarded Investors in People Standard in May 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school has improved substantially since its last inspection. Good leadership and management at all levels have been the driving force in this improvement. The headteacher and other senior leaders have successfully shared their vision and set clear direction. This has focused firmly on raising the achievement of all pupils by improving the quality of teaching and the learning environment. They have led staff well in establishing a calm, pleasant and orderly environment where pupils can thrive. This promotes good personal development and well-being. Pupils enjoy coming to school very much and their attendance has improved considerably as a result and is now good in all years. They behave well both in lessons and outside and say that school is a 'safe and friendly' place. They are very welcoming to visitors.

Achievement from Years 7 to 11 is good and standards are average. Pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are below average and particularly low in literacy. By the time they leave the school in Year 11 they attain standards that are broadly in line with national expectations for five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C and five or more grades at A* to G. This represents good progress. In 2007, pupils did particularly well in English literature, geography and home economics. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics is, however, below the national average. The school's data suggest an improvement this year because of an effective programme introduced to improve pupils' performance in English and mathematics. In 2007, results in Year 9 national tests improved from exceptionally low in 2006 to below average. However, few pupils reached the higher levels in tests. The school's rigorous analysis of the performance of the current Year 9 indicates a further improvement in expected test results in 2008 compared to 2007. There is clear evidence that the numbers reaching higher levels in all three subjects are set to rise and predicted test results are in line with national expectations. The improvement in science results over the last two years has been particularly significant. A strength of the school is the good achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The few pupils at an early stage of learning English make good progress.

Teaching and learning are good overall, and the amount of good teaching is increasing. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive and support a pleasant working atmosphere. Teachers plan lessons carefully with a varied range of activities and resources. Teachers share clear learning objectives with pupils. The effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance the presentation of lessons has improved considerably since becoming a specialist school. This contributes to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Pupils say they learn better when they are actively involved in lessons, and feel there are many opportunities where this is the case. However, the opportunities for pupils to develop their learning by discussing their work with others or reflecting on a question together are too infrequent. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this greatly assists in the good progress they make. There is effective teaching for pupils who are learning English as an additional language and this contributes to their good achievement in tests and examinations. In most of their lessons, pupils receive good feedback on their work in a variety of appropriate ways. They find it helpful in indicating what they need to do to improve. The school improvement plan is addressing the inconsistencies that remain in the quality of this feedback.

The satisfactory curriculum provides many well-planned opportunities that enable pupils to develop a good awareness of a healthy lifestyle and personal safety. However, there are fewer

occasions when the curriculum contributes to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the awareness of the contribution they can make to the community. These aspects of development are satisfactory as a result. The school has identified these gaps and has taken some steps to fill them by introducing drama and citizenship. Although some initiatives like the community-based climate change project are having an impact, they are at an early stage, and not yet supporting fully the development of all pupils. The improvement in standards and increased opportunities for using ICT mean that pupils are developing good skills and attributes that will help them succeed in a changing local job market. There is good curriculum provision for pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities through a range of appropriate courses. Other pupils with additional needs benefit from vocational opportunities at the local college. Mathematics and computing specialist status has had a positive impact on provision and outcomes for all pupils. Standards in mathematics and ICT are improving. Statistics has been successfully introduced as a course at Key Stage 4. The range of ICT courses has increased throughout the school.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Sound systems are in place to ensure that pupils are safe and protected. Systems to provide academic guidance are developing currently. The school sets aspirational targets for achievement. Effective systems are in place to ensure that teachers have the information they need about a pupil's previous achievement and an appropriate target. The sharing of these targets with pupils by subject teachers is happening inconsistently. This means that some pupils are not set clear expectations and do not receive regular guidance on their progress towards their target. Departments and pastoral staff track pupils' progress carefully. When underachievement is identified, a range of effective strategies and additional support are employed such as the Saturday club.

Senior and subject leaders check on the school's work regularly. Their evaluation reflects good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. Effective plans are leading to substantial improvement indicating that the school's capacity for further improvement is good. Governors have provided effective support and challenge throughout these developments. They have demonstrated a good level of commitment and enthusiasm. The school has developed good partnerships with other providers like the local college to enhance the provision it is able to offer. The school seeks to improve its opportunities to work with parents and has recently launched a parents' forum. The parental response to the inspection's questionnaire was low in number but largely appreciative of the school's work. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'excellent atmosphere, staff and pupils are supportive of each other'.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school correctly evaluates the sixth form, run jointly with the neighbouring school, to be satisfactory and improving. Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Recent results show year-on-year improvement in the progress students make, which has previously been below expectation. Most students successfully complete the courses they start. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a close working relationship between the leaders of the two schools and a shared drive to raise standards. An improvement plan is in place because of effective evaluation and the school's senior leadership and governors closely monitor its impact. It is making a positive contribution to improvement and signals good capacity to improve further. Personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form. Through the sixth form council, they are able to contribute their views on sixth form affairs. A number of students give valuable help in the school to support those with learning

difficulties or others who are learning English, but the numbers contributing are small. Students' aspirations in terms of their future choices have increased in response to improved sharing of expectations and guidance. The good curriculum meets the needs of students. As a result of working in partnership with another school, the sixth form is able to offer a wide range of courses, including a number of vocational options offered at Levels 2 and 3. Level 2 courses are enhanced by a work placement and an additional vocational qualification in customer service. Constructive partnerships with other schools are leading to the range of courses being widened. Sixth form teaching and learning were not observed during the inspection, but there is no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluation of satisfactory is not accurate. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Students are well guided in their future choices, and this has improved recently with additional staffing. Most tutors support students well with their personal development and in monitoring progress towards targets but a small number of students do not receive regular support from their tutor.

What the school should do to improve further

- In the drive to raise standards and pupils' expectations of their progress towards achievable targets, ensure that the use of targets in subjects is more consistent and effective.
- Plan more opportunities in lessons for pupils to develop their literacy skills by speaking and listening to each other.
- Ensure that there is appropriate provision in the curriculum to support the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils of all ages and provide them with greater opportunities to contribute to the community.

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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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
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	3	
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?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

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	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	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

8 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Paulet High School, Burton-on-Trent DE15 9RT

Thank you for the help you provided when I visited your school recently. I received a very warm welcome and your comments were very helpful to me. The quality of the education provided throughout the school is good, and satisfactory in the sixth form. The quality has improved in a number of ways since the school's last inspection four years ago. This is because your school has been led well by your headteacher, governors and other senior staff.

The standard of your work is in line with the national average by the time you leave school and your achievement is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Your attendance at school has improved considerably and so has your behaviour. Both are now good. You enjoy school and there are good relationships between you and adults that support your learning. You understand how to lead a healthy life and many of you take part in sport and other activities to promote this. You feel safe at school and you are cared for well. Your curriculum supports the development of these aspects. However, there could be more opportunities for you to develop your spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and to contribute to your community.

The teaching is good. You enjoy it when there are activities that engage you. I think that your learning would improve if you had more opportunities to talk about your work with others. I also think there needs to be a clearer way of sharing your targets with you in subjects so that you know what is expected of you and can achieve higher standards. I have asked the school to put these things in place.

You can help the school to improve even further by striving to do your very best in this year's tests and examinations and by helping your headteacher and staff to put these improvements in place.

Ruth Westbrook Lead inspector