

Salesian School, Chertsey

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125312
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315234
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Cathie Munt HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1265
Sixth form	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father J Dickson SDB
Headteacher	Mr J Kibble
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2004
School address	Guildford Road Chertsey KT16 9LU
Telephone number	01932 582520
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This popular and oversubscribed school serves the largest Deanery in the diocese and some students live 20 miles away. The headteacher and a number of the senior staff took up office in September 2006. Since then, a considerable number of new staff has been appointed at all levels. Staffing is now stable. This term the school re-organised its accommodation with Years 7 to 11 on the Guildford Road site and post 16 provision on the Highfield Road site. Fewer students than is the case nationally qualify for free school meals. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need is lower than the national figure. Students in these categories mainly have behavioural, emotional, social or moderate learning difficulties. A small number have specific learning issues such as dyslexia or speech language and communication problems. Several students have physical disabilities, hearing impairment or are on the Autistic spectrum. The school was awarded FESiS status in May 2007 and specialist school status for mathematics and humanities in June 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The staff and governors in this good and improving Salesian school strive relentlessly, and with considerable success, to live up to the aspirations of its founder St John Bosco. There is a real will to be of service to each other and the wider community in this well-regulated and cohesive community where students thrive and develop into well-rounded and mature young adults. Feeling that staff care about them as individuals, they, in turn, extend that consideration and respect to their peers. During the inspection behaviour was outstanding in lessons. Movement around the school was safe, despite many narrow corridors and pathways. The school has successfully responded to issues from its last inspection. It now meets statutory requirements in citizenship, personal and social development and information and communication technology (ICT); the latter a popular subject choice for Years 10 and 11. Staff are working closely with other organisations to expand vocational courses and other opportunities available to older students.

The school thinks in terms of possibilities, not limitations, for its students. Consequently, personal development and well being, care guidance and support are outstanding and the spirit of community cohesion is embedded firmly in interactions with other groups. Most parental responses to the inspection questionnaire were fulsome in their praise for these aspects of provision, using phrases such as 'above and beyond the call of duty', 'a school with a heart' and 'excellent pastoral care'. That many more Catholic students than before are seeking entry is a testament to the school's good reputation.

Many parents and carers are extremely pleased with their children's progress and with the high levels that many reach in their studies. The majority of sixth formers achieve results above the national average due to their hard work, good teaching and excellent leadership and management. Results at GCSE and at the end of Year 9 are also generally higher than those nationally although, only a small number achieve the highest grades. A few parents felt that more could be done to raise the aspirations of some students in lower sets. It is too soon to judge the impact of recent, additional adult support in some classes. Many parents praised their children's induction to secondary education. A few expressed concern about the lack of lockers. Plans to address this issue are in place.

The outstanding headteacher and leadership team have made an immense impact on a wide range of areas in a comparatively short time. Improving leadership and management at all levels has developed capacity within the rest of the staff to move already good outcomes to a higher level. Under their first-rate leadership, fundamental changes to all aspects of the school's work have enthused the school community and have enabled teachers to deliver a more relevant curriculum. Staff are clearly accountable for the progress made by their classes and consistency in provision has improved. However, senior leaders know that there is more to do to raise standards further, such as consistently planning work at suitable levels for all students. With their effective support and rigorous monitoring, teaching has become good with some examples of outstanding practice. However, these changes have not been in place long enough to have increased the proportion of students achieving the highest grades in examinations. The granting of specialist school status at the end of last term is but one of the many indicators of the effectiveness of this team and a measure of its outstanding capacity to improve provision further. The governing body have been pivotal in enabling these far-reaching developments to reach fruition through their exceptionally clear vision and untiring support.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

In many subject areas high proportions of students attain A or B grades because of well-developed independent study and research skills. However, the number obtaining the highest levels varies between subjects. Excellent leadership and management of the sixth form, exemplified by an apposite development strategy, have resulted in continuing improvements in examination attainment. Successful actions include a focus on improving teaching and learning in lower attaining subjects. While the range of subjects meets most students' needs well, appropriate plans are in place to expand vocational courses and develop diploma opportunities. Students are keen to learn; they enjoy their lessons and have excellent relationships with their teachers, are confident in the care they receive, feel safe and happy and know how to improve their work. High attendance rates confirm their assertion that they enjoy coming to school. Many teachers provide outstanding support and guidance to students who are experiencing difficulties. The house system provides opportunities for sixth form students to develop their teamwork skills and support others in the main school. This they do most conscientiously. The majority of students successfully move on to higher education courses and do well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on good practice in teaching to ensure greater consistency in the range of work provide for students at the either end of the academic scale.
- Increase the proportion of students who achieve the highest grades in public examinations.
- Use the impetus of the school's newly acquired specialist status to extend the range of curricular opportunities on offer to students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are above national averages. The majority make good progress throughout their time in school and do well in public examinations. In 2007, the proportion of pupils attaining the highest levels at the end of Year 9 was significantly better in mathematics than in English or science. The percentage of students obtaining grades A* to C in five or more GCSE subjects has improved annually since 2005. The school's data indicates that GCSE results for 2008 are the highest on record and are considerably higher than last year's national averages. Within this positive overall picture, there are some variations in subjects, particularly in the proportions of students attaining the highest A* and A grades; the school recognises that this is an area for improvement. Students with learning difficulties and or disabilities also make good progress and many meet the challenging targets that they have been set because of effective intervention strategies. The school's recent drive on improving teaching and learning, developing effective target setting procedures and rigorous monitoring of individual students' progress is reflected in students' good achievement and above average standards. The school is successful in promoting positive attitudes to personal achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and wellbeing of students are outstanding because the founder's guiding beliefs are alive in the school's daily life. Students exhibit a strong sense of community and of individual worth. One parent spoke for many when commenting, 'Salesian is a great school with a very strong set of values and high expectations. Staff are committed to ensure the spiritual and moral development of our children.'

Students extend the caring Christian ethos to the local and wider community by, for example, gardening for local elderly citizens and by sending container loads of gifts to African schools. Links to Salesian schools here and abroad develop students' respect for the diversity of faiths and cultures of others. Outside their formal duties, students promote the well being and happiness of others, particularly of those younger than themselves, for example by interacting with them at break. This dispelled the fears of a Year 7 pupil whose mother wrote that 'so far he absolutely loves school because he has made lots of friends including older kids who seem to be very friendly'.

Students respond well to the challenges of the classroom and conduct themselves with due care for safety matters. They appreciate the importance of a healthy lifestyle. A great many enjoy the numerous clubs and sporting activities on offer. Their ability to engage seriously with responsibilities and to work constructively with others, together with their high levels of competency across a range of skills contribute significantly to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Improving the quality of learning is a high priority. Its success is apparent in the good progress made by students. The recent reorganisation of the school has had a significant impact on learning with greater flexibility in the timing of lessons enabling students to concentrate more effectively. A methodical programme of monitoring teaching ensures that it is generally good or better. The strong emphasis on teachers sharing effective practice through focused training sessions is proving successful in strengthening assessment procedures and in helping students to learn more effectively. Teachers ensure that classes know what they are about to learn, and consistent and proficient revision ensures that generally they remember it well. The level of challenge overall is good. In the best lessons, learning is rapid and teachers question effectively, stimulating discussion and enabling students to think for themselves. Their confident subject knowledge engages students' interest, so that they listen attentively and behave well.

Relationships are good, because, as one girl remarked, 'The teachers are approachable'. Parents, consider teachers to be 'professional and caring'. Students know their 'minimum expected grades' and understand what they need to do to reach or exceed them. Occasionally, there is insufficient difference in the work provided for the more able students and those who find learning more difficult. Teachers do not always sufficiently involve classroom assistants in their lesson planning, and consequently do not always make the best use of their talents.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Following the recent re-organisation, the school is moving towards a personally tailored curriculum which meets precisely the needs of every student. The fairly traditional curriculum does not offer a wide range of vocational courses. However it fits the requirements of its students well, enabling them to make appropriate progression. The school regularly reviews the curriculum and responds whenever possible to individuals' interests and needs. It is working closely with other local schools in order to expand the opportunities available to all students. There is appropriate provision for those for whom a totally academic curriculum would be inappropriate. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well through individual and group work which helps to raise their basic standards. Students are given many opportunities to accept responsibilities within the local and global communities and hence to develop their leadership skills. A broad and varied extra-curricular programme, including a popular range of clubs, visits, residential trips, retreats and visiting speakers, enriches students' learning, assisting in their all round development and greatly enhancing their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school believes that every individual really matters and, that with the proper encouragement, the potential of each student is limitless. Consequently, care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff know their students exceptionally well and as a result of exemplary pastoral care, students thrive and develop into mature and well-rounded individuals. Safeguarding requirements are fully met and students are confident that if they have a concern, it will be dealt with swiftly. Parents recognise these strengths and many wrote positively about how the school has boosted their child's confidence and self-esteem. However, a few questioned the effectiveness of channels of communication and consultation. Excellent academic guidance systems ensure that any underachievement is swiftly identified and support plans established. Data is used effectively to set appropriately challenging targets. Progress against these is monitored regularly. Students are very well guided on their future options and are encouraged to have very high aspirations. There is evidence of particularly effective support for vulnerable students, some of whom have exceptionally complex needs. The school works closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that all students receive the support, help and care they need. Excellent relationships with partner primary schools ensure that transition is seamless and new students settle quickly and happily. Thorough systems for monitoring attendance, together with the high expectations and enjoyment experienced by the students, result in excellent attendance and punctuality.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Under the outstanding and innovative leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors are working enthusiastically to realise their shared vision of excellent relationships and academic success. Exemplary leadership and management at senior levels has raised the bar significantly in a short time, with staff and students alike challenged to increase consistency and to turn the current good academic achievement into outstanding achievement in all subjects. The

school community has risen successfully to this challenge, maintaining a good level of academic achievement during a period of rapid change and improvement. However, staff are not complacent. Effective monitoring and support systems that improved grades for Year 11 students last year are being extended to increase the proportion of students achieving the highest grades. The impact of this is apparent in classwork but has yet to translate to exam results.

Senior staff have taken a lead in the systematic analysis of data. Department heads use this with increasing confidence. Consequently, progress is being monitored regularly and accurately leading to more timely intervention. The inclusion of all learners is at the heart of the school's vision and many examples of the school going the extra mile were noted by inspectors and reported by parents. Some parents expressed concerns about levels of provision for less able students. Additional staff have been appointed to address this and training is in place to optimise the use of ancillary adults in classes. However, this provision is very new.

The considerable number of recently appointed staff brings an impressive array of skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to the teaching community. Students are settling admirably into the new work patterns and there is overwhelming support from staff and students for this year's well-managed move to one site.

Community cohesion is intrinsic to the governors' vision for the school. They have an impressive strategic overview and a commanding understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their tenacity in challenging results and their fervour in supporting excellence serves the school well.

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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/or disabilities make progress	2	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

01 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Salesian School, Chertsey, Chertsey, KT16 9LU

We agree with you and your parents that yours is a good and improving school with some outstanding areas. It is led exceptionally well by your popular headteacher, assisted by the excellent staff and governors. You told us that you like the new arrangements. More of you are staying on into the well-led sixth form and more people want to join than there are available places. Many of you said you would like lockers and more shelter. Your headteacher tells me that these items are in the pipeline. The school believes that each and every one of you is special and that with the correct guidance and support you can achieve anything you set your heart on. I am sure you will prove them right. Those of you that we spoke to knew what grades you were aiming for and usually how to get there. Well done! Your attendance is very good and that also is important to help you do well and get high marks. We were impressed by the care that you showed for each other, particularly for those younger than yourselves, and by the amount of work that you do for the school and for those who are less fortunate than yourselves. The list of clubs, visits, trips, retreats and speakers looked really exciting. No wonder you enjoy school so much.

Staff are working hard to provide an even wider curriculum and we agree that it is the right time to be developing and expanding the opportunities available particularly for older students. Staff know you exceptionally well and as a result of their excellent care you make good progress, do well in your studies and develop into mature, responsible and likeable young people. You are confident that if you have a concern, it will be dealt with swiftly. Your parents recognise these strengths and a great many of them wrote positively about how the school has boosted your confidence and self-esteem. However, a few would like to be consulted more often.

There have been many changes in teaching over the last two years or so and many new staff have joined the school. They have begun to settle in and teaching is generally good. We agree with you that the teachers are approachable and that there is an enormous amount of help available for those of you who are having any problems. Staff check on your progress regularly. We have asked them to make sure that work set is at exactly the right level for everyone all of the time. That way more of you should be able to get the highest grades in your exams.

With best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely,

Cathie Munt

Her Majesty's Inspector