

# St John Wall Catholic School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103534
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	323854
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Shaw

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	630
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rose Mason
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Hayatt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 December 2005
<b>School address</b>	Oxhill Road Handsworth Birmingham B21 8HH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01215 541825
<b>Fax number</b>	01215 070993

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–16
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 October 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	323854

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St John Wall Catholic School is a small, oversubscribed comprehensive school in the Handsworth area of Birmingham. Its pupils come from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. One third of the pupils are Catholic. A high proportion of pupils have English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning or emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals.

Currently, the school's permanent headteacher is seconded to a 'National Challenge' school. The school has an acting headteacher.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It has some considerable strengths, notably in its personal support for pupils and its promotion of community cohesion. 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' Jesus' words fittingly describe the effect of this school, providing sanctuary from the violence, drugs and gang culture that are all too familiar to many of its pupils. Leadership has successfully established a calm and stable ethos in which everyone values the individual, regardless of background. The school constantly strives to make a difference to the lives of its pupils and to change communities for the better. Its work in partnership with others to promote the well-being of its pupils is outstanding, as is the contribution pupils make to the community.

While the school provides a satisfactory quality of education, there are good features additional to the outstanding ones mentioned above. The personal development of pupils is good because of the good quality of care, support and guidance they receive. The standards reached by pupils at the end of Years 9 and 11, although below average, represent satisfactory achievement from their starting points. This achievement is the outcome of satisfactory teaching and learning. The curriculum is satisfactory, as is the quality of leadership and management.

The standards that pupils have reached on entry to the school at the age of 11 have fallen since the previous inspection. Detailed information on Year 7 pupils was not available at the time of the inspection but pupils currently in Year 8 entered the school with standards below the national average. Almost one third of pupils now start the school able to read no better than the average eight year old. The school has recently markedly increased its work improving literacy. Additionally, a considerable number of pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school's work with both these groups of pupils is effective so that they achieve as well as other pupils.

In the light of the very many different groups within the school, for example pupils from over 40 racial backgrounds, it is impressive that there is no group with achievement that is less than satisfactory. The school monitors carefully the progress of all pupils and the use of mentors is proving effective in ensuring that all groups achieve equally well. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher grade GCSE passes moved significantly closer to the national average in 2007 and this upward trend was sustained in 2008. In some subjects, pupils know exactly what they should focus upon to improve their work but this is not the case for every pupil in every subject.

A small amount of teaching is outstanding with the remainder good or satisfactory in broadly equal proportion. As a humanities college, the school is now beginning to spread the effective teaching techniques found in history, geography and religious education. Substantially more work remains to be done in this area to get the overall impact of teaching on pupils' progress up to a level that is good.

Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles, shown by the high participation in sport. They are well aware of safe practices and contribute well to the safety of others, for example in supporting pupils on the rare occasions when bullying occurs. Pupils are manifestly proud of their school and enjoy their learning. Attendance is in line with the national average whilst unauthorised absence is low. Behaviour is good. Pupils develop into mature, confident young people who act as ambassadors for the school, for example in taking charge when hosting a recent visit by the bishop. Pupils have a good understanding of the world of work gained, for example, through

work experience and vocational courses. However, standards in English and especially mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) are below average.

The headteacher and his senior team care passionately about the school and each individual. Standards have risen since the previous inspection but a number of the areas then identified have only recently received the emphasis required. The school's self-evaluation is thoughtful but tends, on occasions, to be overly critical. Currently, the process of evaluating the school's effectiveness does not extend sufficiently beyond the senior team. For example, subject leaders are not systematically involved in the process and so the information gained is not used to the full to promote improvement. School planning, whilst identifying appropriate areas, lacks prioritisation and costings. Plans do not identify outcomes in terms of measurable pupil achievement, making it difficult for the school to know exactly what it has achieved.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Spread the effective practices found in the best lessons so that the quality of teaching rises to good and achievement becomes good.
- Improve the accuracy of self-evaluation by including more people in the process and setting measurable benchmarks to judge progress.
- Ensure that every pupil knows exactly how to improve his or her work in every subject. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 have moved closer to the national average in recent years. Results for 2008 indicate that this improvement continues. Standards attained at the age of 16 are also rising with the school gaining its best ever results in 2008. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics is now well clear of the 30% figure of national concern. At both 14 and 16, pupils achieve less in science than in English and mathematics but a new head of science is beginning to tackle this difference. Achievement has increased with the increased number of vocational courses.

Action to improve low levels of literacy is effective and is one major reason why pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as other pupils. The school is very effective in developing skills in English for those using it as an additional language, especially pupils, including asylum seekers, who enter the school with little or no English. These pupils also achieve as well as their peers.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils of all faiths, not just Catholics, contribute positively towards making the school a harmonious community. A noteworthy example was seen in a science lesson. When required to work in groups, pupils did not seek out others of their own race or sex but collaborated readily with their peers regardless of background, to explore motion and acceleration. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils of all faiths use the chapel for reflection and prayer. A small proportion of parents express concern about behaviour but inspectors found

behaviour to be good overall. Occasional instances of unacceptable behaviour merit exclusion and are evidence as to why moral and social development are not still better.

The school council makes a telling contribution to developing the school. It spends its budget conscientiously and develops the political skills of pupils well. An outstanding example is a Year 10 pupil who is justly proud of his contribution to a charter produced by the European Youth Parliament. He readily recognises that he would not have made such an achievement had it not been for his school. Many pupils provide invaluable support to those about to enter the school at the age of 11.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

A typical lesson is well prepared and the teacher has sound subject knowledge. Teachers give clear explanations and give pupils appropriate work to develop skills and understanding. The best lessons capture the imagination of all pupils such as in an English lesson in which every pupil was appropriately challenged even though some were only at the early stages of learning English. In this lesson, the skill of the teacher ensured that all pupils answered questions, intervening to extend replies. This approach to questioning and the involvement of pupils enhanced confidence and skill in speaking. In less successful lessons, there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils or lack of additional material for those taking longer to grasp key points. More work remains to be done to develop the ability of pupils to work independently of their teacher. Similarly, the use of ICT in lessons also needs further development. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to support learning, for example in a food technology lesson, helping pupils to understand technical words. Teachers' marking does not always inform pupils precisely what to do next to improve their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

Although much smaller than the average secondary school, St John Wall offers pupils in Years 10 and 11 an impressive range of over 20 different courses. Vocational courses include sports science, childcare and health and beauty. These appeal to pupils less motivated by academic study. Good provision is made for those learning in the workplace so that they do not fall behind with their other work. A low proportion of pupils choose to study a foreign language to examination level although the school has plans to tackle this. Currently, the school does not monitor the delivery of personal, social and health education. Consequently, it cannot guarantee that pupils receive their entitlement. It is only very recently that the use of ICT across the curriculum has been systematically monitored and developed. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities to which pupils respond well.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Christian care underpins all the work of the school. The Catholic ethos of 'loath the sin but love the sinner' applies to all, no matter what faith. Teachers provide worthy role models for pupils. Pupils appreciate highly the support given when they move to the school. Vulnerable pupils and new arrivals to the country receive outstanding levels of support. Exclusions have fallen in recent years, partly because of the good work done by the pupil support unit. Child protection

procedures are robust so pupils know they are safe in school. Close collaboration with other agencies such as social services enhances the level of care exceptionally well. The academic progress of pupils is carefully tracked but not all teachers provide pupils with sufficient information on how their work can be improved. The proportion of pupils not continuing their education or moving to employment with training after the age of 16 is low for the area. This reflects the good quality of guidance given.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leaders and managers at all levels actively promote the ethos of the school. It is no idle boast when they claim pupils leave their baggage at the school gates. Whilst many aspects of the school's contribution to community cohesion are outstanding, the school does not yet systematically evaluate its work in this area.

The school currently has a deficit budget because of having to pay for essential health and safety work. However, the quality of provision is not being adversely affected and a repayment schedule has been agreed with the local authority. Governors know the school in detail and provide valuable support. However, they are too reliant on the school for information and, as a result, are not well placed to evaluate its performance critically and accurately.

The school takes very positive steps to seek the views of pupils, parents, staff and community representatives. These provide good information on which to base developments. Parents state that the school communicates well with them. Self-evaluation identifies appropriate points to act upon but these are not always prioritised clearly. The school has a satisfactory capacity to make further improvement.

**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](http://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?	3
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

---

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

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

6 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John Wall Catholic School – A Specialist Humanities College, Birmingham, B21 8HH

On behalf of the team of inspectors who visited your school, I would like to thank all of you who helped us in any way. We were incredibly impressed by the way in which you work together as a single community and respect one another, regardless of race or faith. Sadly, we had read of many problems, such as drugs and violence, in the areas in which you live but must praise you for the way in which you leave these problems behind you in school. We were also very impressed by the mature and confident manner in which you spoke to us and by your politeness.

We judge your school to be providing you with a satisfactory education overall but it is one with good and outstanding features. Outstanding are the contributions you make to the community and the way the school works in partnerships to help you. Your personal development and well-being are good because of the good level of care and support you receive. Overall, the standards you reach are below the national average but represent satisfactory progress in view of the standards you had reached when you started at the school. It is pleasing to see that these standards are improving. The fact that the school achieved its best ever GCSE results in 2008 should encourage you. There are many good features to your curriculum, not least the range of courses from which you can choose. However, your school does not track your personal, social and health education and more use could be made of ICT. We judged the leadership and management of the school to be satisfactory because, whilst standards have improved, other matters should have been tackled sooner.

- To help the school continue to improve we have asked its leaders to:-
- Make sure that all your teachers know about, and adopt, the methods used in the very best lessons so that you learn more swiftly and your interest increases.
- Improve the ways in which the school knows how well it is doing so that it can concentrate on what needs to be done most.
- Make sure that each one of you knows exactly how to improve your work in every lesson. Perhaps you have been told and forgotten – if so, remember how important this advice is to you.

We would like to wish you every success in the future and wish every community was as harmonious as yours.

Yours sincerely Mr Michael Shaw Lead inspector