

Holy Trinity Catholic Media Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103538
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323856
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Mary Davis

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 (total)	630
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Rohan
Headteacher	Connie McCormack
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2006
School address	Oakley Road Small Heath Birmingham B10 0AX
Telephone number	01217 720184
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Holy Trinity is a small school serving the Catholic community in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Over two thirds of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and over a quarter speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who have a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. The school was designated a specialist media arts college in 2005. It has the Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark and the Healthy Schools awards, and gained Investors in People status in 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Holy Trinity provides a good quality of education. The impact of its specialist college status in media arts can be seen across the school, enriching the curriculum, providing resources that enhance learning in lessons and providing opportunities for students to develop their self-confidence and raise their aspirations. The senior leaders work as an effective team to promote high achievement and the personal well-being of students, and the caring ethos of the school ensures that all students are known and treated as individuals.

In 2008, the proportion of Year 11 students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above including English and mathematics was near the national average. This represented good overall achievement, and in English their progress was in the top 10% nationally. There were several underperforming subjects however, particularly information and communication technology (ICT). The college has worked hard to address this. Rigorous procedures for tracking students' progress have enabled underachievement to be identified and appropriate intervention and support provided. This has resulted in improved attendance, raised aspirations and improved progress. Current assessment information indicates that results in 2009 will rise further and that challenging targets will be exceeded. All students in the current Year 11 ICT cohort gained a GCSE pass, with the large majority at grade A* to C.

Students are confident, polite and welcoming. They feel safe and say that the college cares for them well, particularly older vulnerable students who have received special care throughout their time at the college. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as a result of an ethos that very successfully encompasses the diversity of their cultures and backgrounds. Students get on well with each other and behave well in class. They enjoy their learning and are keen and enthusiastic, particularly when lessons are exciting. The development of skills to ensure their future economic well-being is outstanding, and is particularly enhanced by the media specialism. Some students expressed concern that they are not sufficiently informed about decisions that affect them and are not allowed sufficient voice within the college.

Teaching is typically good. Class relationships are founded on mutual respect and, as a result, students have a positive attitude to learning. ICT and other media resources are used well to enhance learning, often providing inspiring illustrations to stimulate the imagination, although at times these presentations are too complex and, as a result, some students do not know what they have to do. In weaker lessons, teachers spend too much time instructing, so that students are not sufficiently engaged and become passive. However, tasks are usually well matched to individual needs so that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully involved and the most able students are appropriately challenged.

The good curriculum is focused on providing pathways that are flexible to meet the students' individual needs. Those with highest ability are able to take GCSE examinations early in English and media studies, while a small number of students who might otherwise be excluded or fail to attend are able to follow tailored college courses in line with their interests, keeping them engaged and leading to many being offered employment. The curriculum is enhanced by many special days and visits by professional artists and theatre groups to promote students' personal development. Students value the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport.

Students value the commitment of their teachers in ensuring they succeed academically, typically saying, 'The teachers are always available for extra help and stay after school to give you the support you need.' Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive outstanding

support, and outside agencies are fully involved in ensuring that vulnerable students are cared for. Parents of students who are identified as underperforming value being involved and informed about their children's progress. Some parents are concerned, however, that reports are not detailed enough and would like more opportunities to talk to teachers. Students feel very well guided to make choices about their future courses, but the quality of advice and guidance about how to develop their work or to reach their targets is inconsistent.

The headteacher and senior team are deeply committed to securing quality in every aspect of the school's work and this has resulted in significant improvements since the last inspection, particularly in ensuring that boys achieve well. Middle managers strive to drive up standards by sharing assessment information with teachers to help them plan their lessons, but there is some inconsistency in the effectiveness of this approach. The governing body takes an active role, providing a good level of support and challenge. The school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by ensuring that the quality of all teaching and learning is consistently as good as the best, particularly in terms of students' active involvement in lessons.
- Ensure that all students know how to develop their work in order to achieve their challenging targets.
- Ensure that lines of communication effectively enable parents and students to be fully informed and have a voice within the college.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students generally join the school having attained below average results in national tests in English, mathematics and science in their previous schools, although this fluctuates year on year. By the end of Key Stage 3, results are broadly average. The college's assessment data and evidence gained from lesson observations during the inspection indicate that students are currently making satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. At Key Stage 4 in 2008, standards were broadly average. The percentage of students gaining five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics showed an increase on the 2007 results. Year 11 students made good progress from their below average standards on entry in Year 7 but there were clear differences in the performance of the various groups of students, with boys making better progress than that expected nationally. The progress of White British students was significantly better than that of students from other ethnic backgrounds. The college has successfully used a wide range of strategies to close this gap. Current monitoring indicates that the progress of these groups has improved and the 2009 Year 11 students are likely to reach higher standards and exceed their challenging targets. Results already received indicate that performance in mathematics has improved along with all previously underperforming subjects. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Since the last inspection, the school has worked effectively to ensure its assessment systems are more robust and has improved the quality of its tracking and is now much sharper in setting itself suitably challenging targets. This information is used consistently by staff to raise achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students say that behaviour has improved as a result of teachers taking a consistent approach to behaviour management. Behaviour during the inspection was good, resulting in a calm atmosphere in classrooms and around the college. There is no racial intolerance and students report that the rare cases of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. They say that there is always someone to talk to if they need comfort or help, and that the text helpline also provides support. Most students attend well, although the college is working hard to improve the attendance of a small number of persistent absentees. Students value opportunities to take responsible roles. The school council, for example, enables them to make decisions and have a voice in the running of the school. However, not all students have this opportunity and lines of communication are not always effective. Prefects take their responsibilities seriously and value the opportunity to take leadership roles and to support younger ones. Most students are aware of the need for an appropriate diet and regular exercise and willingly take part in sporting opportunities that the college provides. They are safety conscious and in particular know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Some students rightly voiced concern about the inadequate toilet facilities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students say they value the relationships they have with their teachers and enjoy lessons when teachers know them well. The recent instability of staffing, due in part to long-term absence, has resulted in some lessons being taught by supply teachers, especially in Key Stage 3, and in these lessons, students say that they learn least well. They say they learn best when teachers make lessons fun and enable them to make an active contribution. However, some lessons are too 'teacher-led', resulting in students becoming passive. Some outstanding practice was seen during the inspection, where teachers had high expectations of their students, working at a fast pace on well-structured tasks that enabled quick progress for students of all abilities. Effective questioning techniques ensured that all were suitably challenged and encouraged to develop their thinking skills. In the best lessons, students know how they will be assessed and are able to evaluate their own progress but this practice, together with the quality of marking of students' work, is inconsistent and so they do not all know how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum reflects the school's specialism in the media arts. The lead subjects of media, art, textiles and ICT provide a wide range of opportunities, notably in bringing in professional practitioners and the use of 'state of the art' equipment to enhance the curriculum. This is spread across the whole curriculum, with staff receiving training to improve the quality of teaching and to use resources effectively in their subjects. The college has recognised that students for whom English is an additional language have made slower progress than their peers, and has provided extra lessons for these students to promote literacy through such projects as 'Real men read', thereby improving their use of reading and writing skills to raise their attainment in all subjects. Vulnerable students are supported well through nurture groups. The curriculum also focuses on developing learning and thinking skills. Students value the wide

variety of extra-curricular activities, and the sporting and arts activities are particularly popular, although Key Stage 4 students only have one hour of timetabled physical education each week. Students particularly appreciate special curricular days and involvement with events such as the Heritage Project. The opportunities to study ICT in Key Stage 4 are currently limited but this has been addressed in planning for the coming academic year.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The college cares for its students extremely well; arrangements for ensuring the students' health and safety are secure, and all safeguarding requirements are met. It is totally committed to including all students and encouraging them to achieve their potential and is supported well in this by the governing body. Provision for students with additional learning needs includes support from other students. For example, there is a social interaction group where students with autism are paired with a peer. They are successfully managing a garden project that is proving beneficial to students' well-being and having a positive impact on their learning. Learning support assistants have been specially trained to support students with differing physical problems. Persistent absence has been reduced through effective intervention. Currently the processes for setting individual targets and providing guidance to enable students to reach them are inconsistent. This has been recognised by the leadership and new systems providing frequent opportunities for academic monitoring and discussion are being introduced.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers are a strong team and share a clear vision for college development that has students' well-being at its heart. The leadership of the specialist subjects is particularly effective in developing partnerships across the college and the community. The college knows itself well. Middle leaders are part of the self-evaluation process and take responsibility for raising achievement, although there is some inconsistency in their effectiveness. The college promotes community cohesion actively and has strong partnerships with other schools in the diocese that enable students to mix with others from a different ethnic background. Links are also being forged with Scandinavian partners. Governors are supportive of the school and are holding the leadership accountable for raising standards and achievement.

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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
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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
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	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	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?	2
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	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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

15 July 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Holy Trinity Catholic Media Arts College, Birmingham B10 0AX

My colleagues and I enjoyed our visit to your school. We were particularly impressed by your mature comments, and thank you so much for helping us to find our way around. It is a good school, and these are our main findings.

- Standards by the end of Year 11 are broadly average but improving. You are exceeding the targets set for you in many subjects and making good progress.
- You enjoy school, particularly when lessons are active, and you value the relationships you have with your teachers and each other. Your behaviour in lessons is good and most of you attend well, although there are still some of you who are persistently absent.
- Some of you are concerned that communications are not good enough and your opinions are not sufficiently considered when changes are made. We noted your concerns about the toilets and have asked the college to improve them.
- Teaching is good. It is enhanced by the good resources that enable teachers to match tasks in lessons to your needs, although you do not always get the information you need to know about how to improve your work.
- The curriculum is good, enabling you to follow courses that match your interests and abilities, and is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and special events such as visiting artists.
- The excellent care you receive enables you to feel safe and well supported and you particularly value the fact that your teachers know you well and care about you as individuals. We feel, however, that the academic guidance you receive is inconsistent and that sometimes you are set targets that are too low.
- The college's leaders are working well to ensure that things continue to improve.

In order to take your learning to new heights, we have asked the college to raise standards further by ensuring that teaching is consistently good and that you are kept informed, both in lessons and in teachers' marking, as to how you can improve your work. We have also asked the college to improve the level of communication with you and your parents so that they are kept better informed about your progress and you have more of a say in developing the college. You can help by always working hard to achieve your targets and attending regularly.

Yours faithfully

Mary Davis

Lead inspector