

# St Julies Catholic High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104712
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	324094
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jane Austin HMI

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1195
Sixth form	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Geraldine Poole
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sister Ann Gammack
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Speke Road Woolton Liverpool Merseyside L25 7TN
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 4286421
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 4211399

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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

St Julie's Catholic High School is a larger than average school for girls. It is situated in a neighbourhood with some social and economic disadvantage but draws students from a very wide area and range of backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is average. Almost all students are White British with a small proportion from a range of minority ethnic heritages. A very small number speak English as an additional language with one student at the early stages of learning it. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low and the number with a statement of special educational need is well below average. The sixth form is smaller than average and includes a very small number of boys. St Julie's includes sixth-form provision as part of the South Liverpool Collaborative, a group of four schools. The school has specialist language college status. It has gained recognition in a range of areas through Artsmark gold, Healthy Schools, Sportsmark, Eco Schools Bronze, and International School awards. At the time of the inspection students in Years 11, 12 and 13 were on study leave and taking public examinations.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

St Julie's provides its students with a satisfactory education overall. Students enjoy school and are proud of its achievements. There are some clear strengths in students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development that reflect the school's Catholic ethos and are captured in its motto, 'Let them be taught what is necessary for life.' The school's high expectations, combined with good care and support, help students develop into mature young people well prepared for the world beyond school. Overall, the standards they reach by the end of Year 11 are above average. However, falling standards in mathematics over several years mean that students are not as well prepared as they should be in this area. For this reason a below average proportion gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics in 2008.

Given their starting points in Year 7 students' achievement is satisfactory. This is a consequence of satisfactory teaching. A 'one size fits all' approach to lesson planning, mundane activities and too much teacher direction, combined with too few opportunities for active, independent learning, limit students' progress. In the main students know their targets, but guidance towards reaching these varies in quality between subjects and sometimes lacks sufficient challenge. Marking does not always have sufficient focus on improvement to contribute well to students' learning. Inconsistent, cumbersome and occasionally ineffective systems for tracking students' progress hinder the identification of underperformance and this has had an adverse impact on students' achievement, particularly in mathematics.

The school's specialism broadens the satisfactory curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 where all students study at least one modern foreign language. It enhances enrichment opportunities that include a wide range of trips and overseas visits. The curriculum is suitably tailored to meet the particular needs of vulnerable students in Year 7 and those in Key Stage 4 for whom a traditional academic curriculum is not appropriate.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and the school runs efficiently day-to-day. However, the lack of consistently implemented whole-school systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and tracking students' progress is impeding sharply focused self-evaluation by leaders. It also means that middle leaders are not always held to account for standards and provision with sufficient rigour. Governance is satisfactory. Governors know the school well and are highly committed to its improvement. They have shown determination in addressing areas of weakness. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

Sixth-form provision is satisfactory. Attainment on entry is just below the national average. This reflects the changing profile of the students as the school strives to provide courses suitable for a wider range of abilities and aspirations while employing more robust entry requirements for A-level courses. Standards achieved are in line with national averages and this reflects good progress given this entry profile. This is an improvement on previous years. The shared provision with other local schools ensures that students have a good range of courses to choose from and this, combined with additional activities such as Christian Action in the community, provides a good curriculum. Inspectors spoke with a small number of students who said they appreciate the good, positive relationships with their teachers and feel well supported. Robust procedures

are in place to monitor students' attitudes and engagement with courses. However, detailed and regular tracking of students' progress towards targets is not well developed. Consequently, managers are not able easily to demonstrate the extent to which standards and progress are improving. Overall leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. There are some good features, particularly in the way leaders have improved provision and students' achievement in the 2008 examinations.

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

- Raise standards and achievement in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that learners make good progress.
- Implement an effective system for setting challenging targets and tracking students' progress towards these.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers at all levels so that all are held properly accountable for students' achievement and the quality of provision.
- Implement coherent whole-school systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision so that the school can accurately identify its priorities.

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**

Attainment on entry to the school is a little above the national average: there is a greater proportion of high attaining students than found nationally. Overall, standards reached by the end of Key Stage 4 are above average. Given students' starting points this represents satisfactory progress. The proportion of students gaining at least five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics was below average at 43% in 2008. Performance against this measure has fallen over the last three years as a result of declining standards in mathematics. Analysis of the mathematics results shows that there has been inadequate progress by a significant minority of students across the full ability range. This was compounded in 2008 when a number of students targeted for higher grades failed the examination. The school has correctly identified this as a major concern and taken action to address some of the causes of underperformance. While some good progress has been made in improving the numbers expected to achieve grade C and above this year, improving rates of progress for all students has not yet been addressed.

Good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they make good progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Attendance is above average and the small number of students who are persistently absent has reduced as a consequence of the school's assiduous support and challenge. Students behave well, are polite and courteous and have high expectations of their peers. Students say that they feel safe and the rare incidents of bullying are dealt with fairly and rapidly. They appreciate having an adult to speak to whenever they have issues to discuss and value the contribution made by students in resolving disputes

and providing support through peer counselling. Students make a positive contribution to the school and the community beyond through, for example, charitable fundraising, representation in the Liverpool Youth Parliament, working towards the eco schools award and as junior sports leaders. The school council has played an active role in improving outdoor facilities and school lunch menus. Students understand how to lead healthy lifestyles and participation rates in extra-curricular activities in the arts and sport have been recognised by national awards.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Recent emphasis on students' cultural development is paying dividends. Students enjoy learning about other cultures through, for instance, a range of whole-school theme days, visits to places of interest and charitable links. Students are well prepared for life beyond school both academically and in their personal development. They mature into young adults with self-discipline and the skills to cooperate well with others.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. A common system of planning guides teachers to set lesson objectives. However, this structure is often weakened because learning outcomes for groups of students of differing abilities are not planned for explicitly, so teaching activities do not always match the needs of all students. Lessons where learning is satisfactory are characterised by too much input from teachers, lacklustre undemanding activities and a pedestrian pace that can lead to waning attention from students. The good relationships between teachers and students that are a notable feature of lessons are not capitalised on fully.

In better lessons lively, enthusiastic and confident teaching enables students to make at least good progress. Teachers challenge students to think hard and provide opportunities for individuals or groups to contribute their own ideas. They encourage students to assess their own and their classmates' progress. All students are fully engaged in lessons which move along briskly. Work in pairs and groups is used well to develop and consolidate students' understanding. A good example of this during the inspection was a Year 10 English lesson where students worked in pairs to highlight violence and tenderness through imagery in poems and then presented their findings to others who then had the opportunity to ask questions.

Students' pride in their work and the school's high expectations are evident in consistently high standards of presentation. Generally work is marked regularly but there is a lack of consistency in the depth of marking which means that some students are not well informed about what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and promotes students' personal development well. At Key Stage 3, students study a traditional range of subjects with the school's specialism reflected in enhanced provision for modern foreign languages. A small number of lower attaining and vulnerable students in Year 7 receive a curriculum that successfully focuses on improving their skills in literacy and numeracy as well as their confidence as learners.

The curriculum at Key Stage 4 provides a good balance of academic and vocational courses while ensuring most students study at least one modern foreign language. A vocationally biased course, run in conjunction with a local college, meets the needs of the small number of students in Years 10 and 11 for whom mainstream courses are not the most appropriate option. Information and communication technology (ICT) is generally used well to enhance teaching and learning. However, arrangements to ensure that all students are provided with a planned programme of study in ICT at Key Stage 4 are not in place.

Specialist language college status has enabled the school to provide sustained, effective support for the teaching of modern foreign languages in partner primary schools and to provide language courses for adults in the community. However, it has not led to a significant increase in the number of students choosing to study a modern foreign language in the sixth form. The school works well with partner organisations to meet the needs of learners in the sixth form. It offers a good range of advanced level subjects including three applied courses. Two Level 2 vocational courses provide an alternative progression route into the sixth form for some students.

The school encourages learners to take part in the good programme of extensive extra-curricular activities including revision classes and a wide range of sporting activities. Themed events involving a broad range of external providers, together with a wide programme of visits both in this country and abroad, give good opportunities for students to extend their learning and broaden their horizons.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The care and support provided for students is good. Safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements. Staff with pastoral responsibilities know students well and the care provided for them generally matches their needs. When required, the support of external agencies is drawn upon effectively. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well cared for and make better than expected progress. The school accurately identifies and supports vulnerable students on entry to Year 7 and has established close working relationships with parents and carers. The large number of inspection questionnaires returned by parents reflects overwhelming positive views of the school. However, a common concern expressed, and borne out by inspection evidence, was the lack of opportunity for parents to discuss their child's progress with subject teachers. Students and parents are positive about the support provided at key transition points. The high quality of the school's careers advice and guidance has been recognised by a national award. This, alongside effective liaison with the connexions service, has resulted in almost all students continuing in education, training or employment with training.

The quality of academic guidance is satisfactory. Targets for every student are set using a recognised national system but the school does not always ensure that these are sufficiently challenging. A number of subject specific systems for tracking students' progress are in use, with variable levels of effectiveness in identifying underachievement. A consequence of this is that not all departments adequately support students to achieve their targets. This is having a particularly detrimental impact on the progress made by students in mathematics.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leaders and managers judge the school, and its leadership and management, to be good. However, inspection evidence indicates that this view is too generous and that leadership and management are satisfactory. The bar has been raised nationally but the school has not always kept pace with developments. The school lacks fully coherent, cohesive management systems to enable it to evaluate its provision in the round and this is hindering senior leaders in setting clear strategic direction. While major areas of strength and weakness are identified accurately, the impact of measures taken to address the latter is not always assessed rigorously. One reason for this is that clear plans and quantifiable outcomes are not always established as a baseline. Another factor is that systems for monitoring and evaluating provision vary in depth and breadth across departments with no agreed whole-school approach. In addition, because several systems for tracking students' progress towards their targets are in operation, leaders have not been able to rely with full confidence on this information as a basis for their judgements and decisions. Senior leaders have recognised the need to remedy this and the school is close to implementing an accessible, whole-school system for tracking students' progress.



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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	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	3	3

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	2
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	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

<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.

<sup>2</sup>IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	IE <sup>2</sup>
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	2	
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	2	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3	IE <sup>2</sup>
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	IE <sup>2</sup>

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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	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**

Inspection of St Julie's Catholic High School, Liverpool, L25 7TN

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for making us welcome and helping us with the inspection when we visited your school recently. Your contributions helped us reach our conclusion that overall the school provides you with a satisfactory education. This has some good features.

We were impressed by your pride in the school and in your work. Your polite and courteous behaviour, above average attendance and good relationships with your teachers and classmates all combine to prepare you well for life after school. You make a good contribution to the community, both locally and further afield, through the Christian Action programme, the Sunflower Centre and fundraising for charities, such as the orphanage in Sierra Leone. Staff work hard to support and care for you effectively. Those of you who find learning difficult make good progress because you are well supported. Many of you participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided. You have lots of opportunities for trips and overseas visits, many linked to modern foreign languages.

By the end of Year 11 the standards you reach are above average. However, they are not high enough in mathematics and we have asked the school's leaders to improve them. Overall you make satisfactory progress in the main school but this improves in the sixth form where you make good progress. We have asked the school to ensure that you make better progress by making work in lessons more demanding, setting you challenging targets and tracking your progress accurately so that help can be provided for those who fall behind. We have also asked the school to establish rigorous systems for evaluating all the school provides for you. This will help the headteacher and senior staff identify where improvements are required.

We wish you all continued success in the future.