

Archbishop Beck Catholic Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104717
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	324096
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1259
Sixth form	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Southern
Headteacher	Mr Paul Dickinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
School address	Cedar Road Liverpool Merseyside L9 9AF
Telephone number	0151 5256326
Fax number	0151 5242465

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school serving an urban area of challenging social and economic circumstances. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is well above average. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. However, the proportion with a statement of special educational need is very low. The school is a designated specialist sports college with information and communication technology (ICT) as a named second specialism. The school has gained Artsmark, Sportsmark and Healthy Schools awards. The school is also a Creative Partnership school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and rapidly improving school with outstanding features. Chief among these is the outstanding quality of leadership and management at all levels which has driven the school forward so quickly and successfully since the previous inspection. As a result, the school has outstanding capacity to improve even further. It offers good value for money. Provision for students' care, guidance and support is outstanding and is enhanced through excellent liaison with a wide range of partners outside school. In this highly inclusive school the level of respect between adults and students is very apparent. The school uses its specialist status to very good effect. It has a profound influence on supporting improvement across the school and fulfils a central role in raising standards and improving the quality of teaching. Parents are almost unanimous in valuing the education the school provides. They clearly recognise the pace of improvement. Many comment on how extremely approachable and caring the staff are. 'I had a few doubts when I chose the school but I was wrong. The high levels of care it provides and the high expectations it sets mean that my children are happy and making good progress,' was a typical comment.

Standards have been rising steeply for the last three years. From below average starting points students make good progress and achieve well to attain average standards by the end of Year 11. The proportion of students attaining five or more higher GCSE grades has risen dramatically. However, there has been slower progress when English and mathematics are taken into account. The school is aware of this and is responding rigorously by focusing on effective intervention and support strategies. These are working well. Inspection evidence shows that students are now making good progress in English and mathematics and so standards are rising significantly.

Good achievement and progress reflect the consistently good teaching that students receive. This is supported by a good curriculum that has been carefully developed to meet specifically the needs of all students by providing a wide range of courses and qualifications. Teaching is well prepared. It focuses sharply on students' learning because teachers make good use of the wealth of data on students' progress to tailor activities to students' needs and abilities. However, in some lessons the level of challenge, especially for higher attaining students, is not high enough. This acts as a brake on the progress these students could and should make. Relationships between teachers and students are strong and built on mutual respect.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Most students are mature, confident and sensible. Their behaviour is at least good and frequently better. They are welcoming and polite to visitors. They enjoy school and are obviously proud of it. Attendance is broadly average and along with punctuality has improved significantly over the last three years; their importance has been given a much higher profile and students enjoy coming to school much more. Students are very aware of the importance of good health and physical activity. They appreciate and enjoy the very wide range of sporting opportunities open to them. Participation rates are high. Rising aspirations mean that increasing numbers of Year 11 students are choosing to stay in full-time post-16 education and/or training. This is a sign of how effectively the school is raising students' levels of confidence and self-esteem and supporting their future economic well-being.

At the root of the school's improvement and success lie outstandingly effective leadership and management. It starts with the enthusiasm of the headteacher and spreads throughout the school. Strong yet sensitive leadership has got everyone pulling strongly in the same direction.

There is a crystal-clear vision for the future direction of the school and its values, based on a highly accurate and robust analysis of where improvements are most needed. Strong teamwork means that adults at all levels are not only clear about the school's goals but are dedicated to achieving them.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good and improving at a fast rate. Outstanding leadership and management combined with outstanding levels of care, guidance and support are rejuvenating the sixth form's sense of purpose and boosting students' levels of enjoyment and self-confidence. 'I never thought about going into the sixth form but I'm glad I did. The teachers are great and really help you do your best to succeed,' was a typical student comment. Students enter the sixth form from a range of schools, often with lower than average starting points. Students make good progress and standards have improved rapidly and are now average by the end of Year 13. Inspection evidence confirms that targets for further improvement are realistic and realisable. The impact of the school's specialisms can be seen in the excellence of sixth form results in physical education, ICT and business studies. The curriculum benefits greatly from collaboration with a wide range of other sixth forms and colleges to offer a broad range of courses. 'There's something for everyone who wants it. That's great,' was one student's summary. Students' progress towards demanding targets is checked meticulously. Underachievement in the sixth form is quickly identified and nipped in the bud. Attendance is very good because students know how important it is and because it is very tightly monitored. The head of sixth form, ably supported by other leaders and managers, runs an extremely tight ship. Students know exactly what is expected of them and why. They respond with great enthusiasm and high levels of motivation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of students attaining at least five higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics.
- Make sure that teaching is consistent in meeting the needs of all students, especially those of higher attaining students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are below average. Good teaching and support enable all students to make good and improving progress as they move up through the school.

By the end of Year 9 standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average. Although the school did not meet its demanding targets for the proportion of students gaining the higher levels in national assessments in 2008, inspection evidence shows that the very challenging targets for the current year are set to be achieved.

The extremely demanding targets for the proportion of students attaining five or more higher grades overall at GCSE were met in 2008. Results in the school's specialist subject areas made a major contribution towards this. However, the school fell short of its target for five or more higher grades including English and mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that the current Year 11 students are on track to meet their demanding targets, including in English and

mathematics. Results for students entered early for GCSE in English and results for modular elements in GCSE mathematics provide hard and secure evidence of this.

Good teaching and effective support enable all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students display a very high commitment to maintaining a healthy lifestyle as shown through their commitment to and enjoyment of a wide range of school-based activities. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They show good understanding of right and wrong. Their spiritual development is promoted effectively through opportunities for prayer and reflection in assemblies and the daily routine. During one assembly their level of attention and reflection were impressive when empathising with those less fortunate than themselves. Students say they feel safe in school. They feel confident in sharing any matters with adults in school because they trust them to deal with problems swiftly and effectively. Attendance is broadly average and improving rapidly. Participation in community-based activities such as the leadership programme is good. The active school council meets regularly but some students were unsure about its function and were unable to point to improvements it has brought about. Students are active in supporting local, national and international charities. Students' preparation for their future economic well-being is good. They say they feel confident about the choices they need to make when compulsory schooling ends.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most teaching is good or better. It is especially strong in the school's specialist subjects. Teachers' good use of clear learning objectives at the start of the lesson allied with their good reviews of progress during lessons secures consistently good learning. Good relationships in the classroom mean that students behave well and take their learning seriously. Good questioning encourages students' thinking skills by expecting them to give extended responses and reasons for their answers. Teaching makes good use of ICT to add extra levels of variety and stimulus to lessons. Students respond especially well to teaching that is brisk, varied and challenging. Some teaching does not succeed in engaging students' interest because tasks set are either too difficult or, more typically, too easy. This hinders the progress of some students. Teachers mark students' books regularly and meticulously. Their comments are consistently helpful in telling students how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad curriculum meets the needs of all students well. In Key Stage 3 the recent introduction of 'opening minds' is laying foundations for the improvement of students' creativity and independent learning skills to support their future progress. In Years 10 and 11 the range of courses and qualifications has been extensively broadened so that students of all abilities have options appropriate to their needs. The development of courses and qualifications in the school's specialist subjects has added significantly to students' enjoyment, motivation and academic achievement. The effective programme for personal, social and health education provides good

levels of support for students' personal development and well-being. Students appreciate the wide range of enrichment activities on offer; participation rates are high. Sports, music, educational visits and travel abroad all make a positive contribution to students' personal development by broadening their horizons and helping them mature into confident young adults.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding levels of care, guidance and support contribute significantly to students' social and emotional well-being. The inclusion of all students is central to the school's work. Students speak very highly of the support they receive. 'There is always someone ready to listen and help,' was a typical comment. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Safeguarding arrangements and policies and procedures for health and safety, including risk assessment, are in place and reviewed regularly. There are highly effective strategies to support and guide students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school uses data exceptionally well to set academic targets and to check on the progress every student makes towards them. Any underachievement is quickly identified and prompt remedial action effectively brings students back into line with their expected targets. The school uses its extensive links with outside agencies outstandingly well. These, allied to the work of a wide support team including learning mentors, mean that the needs of vulnerable students and their families are exceptionally well met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management are bringing about sustained and rapid improvement in all aspects of the school's work. Treating all students equally and giving everyone the best possible start are central to the school's work and practice. The headteacher has set a clear direction for the school and is supported by a committed and very able senior and middle leadership team. They work very effectively together to evaluate accurately the school's performance and to formulate well targeted strategies that bring about improvements. Subject and pastoral leaders analyse performance data meticulously and set suitably challenging targets. Senior and middle managers monitor learning and teaching regularly and accurately. The results are used effectively to identify aspects for further improvement and share best practice. Governors play an important role in helping senior leaders set the strategic direction for the school. They provide high levels of challenge and support and hold the school rigorously to account. Higher standards, improved behaviour and the harmonious working of the school mean its reputation in the local community is high and rising. The school has taken effective measures to promote good community cohesion. This has been achieved through the extensive range of links with schools and other bodies locally, nationally and internationally, which have enabled students to develop a good sense of understanding and respect for others including those from different backgrounds.

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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	3	3
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	

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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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	2	

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	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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	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**

Thank you for your warm and courteous welcome when I came to your school recently with my fellow inspectors. We enjoyed meeting you and getting to know your school.

You will be pleased to hear that you go to a good school which is getting better all the time. We were impressed by how sensibly you behave and how well you get on with each other and the adults working with you. Your school really takes excellent care of you and works very hard to make sure that you get the best start in life. It is good to see your attendance rates improving in leaps and bounds – well done! That, and your hard work, is partly the reason why standards are rising so quickly. GCSE results have risen steeply for the last three years and are set to go on rising because the teaching you receive is consistently good and teachers have high expectations of what you can do. You are lucky to go to such an outstandingly well led and managed school in which all the adults pull strongly together to help you learn and make progress. In order to make your school even more effective we are asking it to do two things.

- Make sure that more Year 11 students gain five or more higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics.
- Make sure that teaching is consistently challenging for all of you, but especially for those of you who are fast learners.

I am confident that you will continue to work hard to make sure that your school continues to go from strength to strength in future.

I wish the very best for the future.