

Sacred Heart Catholic College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104961
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	324138
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Jan Bennett HMI

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)	1469
Sixth form	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Louise Fraser
Headteacher	Mr J Summerfield
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2006
School address	Liverpool Road Crosby Liverpool Merseyside L23 5TF
Telephone number	0151 9312971
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Age group	11–18
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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

Sacred Heart College is in Crosby, six miles north of Liverpool. The school operates on two sites within walking distance of each other. It is larger than average and continues to grow. Students joining the school in Year 7 have higher than average prior attainment and the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. Few students are entitled to free school meals. The vast majority of students are White British and very few have a first language other than English. Most students are from three local primary schools and are baptised Catholics. The school gained specialist mathematics and computing status in September 2004. A section 48 inspection, on behalf of the Archdiocese of Liverpool, took place at the same time as this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sacred Heart is an outstanding school. Under the inspired leadership of the headteacher, staff have created a very caring and vibrant learning environment in which students thrive. The Catholic ethos underpins all the work of the school and students are achieving excellence as well as developing into very mature and responsible young people. The responses to the parental questionnaire show they are very supportive of the school.

Standards are exceptionally high. GCSE results, for example, have been well above the national average for a number of years and have continued to improve. The school has been very quick to address any areas of under-performance and actions taken have been very successful. Students' achievement is outstanding and they are making much better progress than those in similar schools.

Students are outstanding ambassadors for the school. Their behaviour is exemplary and they are polite, mature and confident. They contribute very well to discussions, offering carefully considered views and listen attentively to the contributions of others. They are well informed about healthy lifestyles and know how to stay safe. They report that instances of bullying are rare and they are not aware of any racism in school. Students contribute very effectively to the life of the school and the wider community and are very active fundraisers. Participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities is very high, contributing to the excellent personal development of the students.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now outstanding. Well planned strategies to address areas of weakness have been very effective. Students enjoy their lessons, have an excellent approach to learning and participate very well in class. The systematic monitoring of individual students' progress has been improved, enabling high quality and effective support to be given promptly. These improvements plus the enhancement of the curriculum have played a major part in raising standards.

Specialist college status for mathematics and computing has enabled the school to offer a very wide range of successful information and communication technology (ICT) courses. Standards in the specialist subjects are particularly high in the main school and targets are often exceeded. The mathematics department is very strong and spearheads developments to improve teaching across the school. Both the mathematics and ICT teams work extensively with other schools and the local community.

Students are extremely well supported in school and the quality of academic guidance is excellent, ensuring that students of all abilities and backgrounds make outstanding progress. Procedures for safeguarding meet current government requirements, students are well cared for in school and they feel safe, but health and safety procedures have not been reviewed and updated.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. There is a very clear vision for the school that is extremely well supported by staff and has the best interests of students at its heart. The senior leadership team has a very good blend of complementary skills and the middle management team is very strong. Governors are very supportive of the school and they are prepared to challenge managers when appropriate. However, governors do not ensure that all policies and procedures are systematically reviewed and updated. The school has developed very well since the last inspection and has addressed all the areas for improvement. It has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding. The students are confident and assured young people and it is a delight to be in their company. Some high attaining Year 11 leavers go to the local sixth form college or move into the private school system which means that sixth formers embark on A-level courses with standards a little below average. Analysis of A-level examination results in recent years shows a sustained picture of students attaining above average standards. Recruitment to the sixth form is high and course completion rates are very good. Progression into higher education, further training and employment is at a very high level. Students' personal development is outstanding. Their extensive contributions to the life of the school community reflect their close identity with the values of the school. They help younger students improve their learning and widen their leisure activities. Sixth formers' strong commitment to doing well allied to their teachers' deep understanding of subjects and assessment requirements are potent factors in their achieving excellent progress. The curriculum is outstanding: the carefully planned introduction of vocational areas of study has increased its popularity. A very well-planned enrichment programme helps students to prepare well for life after the sixth form, often through the use of outside organisations. Academic, career and educational guidance are excellent. The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The extended provision has been based on extremely thoughtful and accurate evaluation of where improvement is required to fulfil high aspirations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all policies, especially those relating to health and safety, are appropriately reviewed and updated.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards in the main school have been significantly high for the last few years and rising. For example, the proportion of Year 11 students obtaining five or more high grade GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, increased from 57% in 2007 to 80% in 2008. The school's internal data, mock examination results and the quality of the work seen in lessons suggest that high standards have been maintained this academic year. Students make excellent progress and achievement in 2008 was significantly better than in similar schools. Achievement was more variable in the previous two years with students not achieving as well as expected in English but effective action was taken and achievement in English is now outstanding. No specific group of students underachieves and outstanding support provided by the school enables those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve in line with their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of students is an outstanding feature of the school. Students enjoy both their lessons and the many enrichment activities, which is reflected in their high levels of attendance. The Catholic ethos of the school, together with an effective and comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) help give them a very strong sense of spirituality, social and moral awareness, and respect for each other and those from different backgrounds. Students make an outstanding contribution to

the life of the school, to the local community and to international causes. There is a very high level of participation in voluntary and community activities. The behaviour and attitudes seen by inspectors were excellent and relationships throughout the school are very good. This contributes to students' strong sense of feeling safe and secure. Students are very aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles and many of them participate in the wide range of sporting and fitness clubs on offer. The combination of a very successful work experience programme in Year 10, high academic standards and highly developed personal effectiveness skills prepare students very well for their future economic well-being. The vast majority progress into further and higher education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching of outstanding quality underpins the excellent progress that students make. Positive relationships in every classroom, together with students' exemplary behaviour, ensure that lessons progress at a very good pace and students thoroughly enjoy their learning. Lesson planning is consistent, detailed and, in the best instances, includes the precise expected outcomes for different groups or individuals. Teachers make the aims and objectives of each lesson very clear to students and ensure that there is time at the end to reflect on progress and new learning. They move around classrooms extremely well, regularly assessing students' work in order to rectify any misconceptions or to add further challenge. This ensures that students remain focused, sustain their concentration and make very good use of their time in lessons. Many teachers are skilled at asking open-ended questions that provoke students to think hard and they also use paired and small group tasks very well to the same purpose. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to encourage students to reflect on their work and develop a spirit of enquiry and independent thought. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use to excellent effect when responding to students' astute questions or providing specific technical guidance. Teachers mark students' work regularly, grade it for effort and attainment, and mostly provide analytical comments to guide students' efforts to improve further. Teaching assistants provide high quality support that enhances students' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. It meets the needs of the students extremely well and plays a significant role in the outstanding achievement and attendance of students. All statutory requirements are met. At Key Stage 3 the school is introducing very good, innovative approaches with themes such as healthy living which is taught across different subjects. The Key Stage 4 curriculum gives a wide range of choice including opportunities to study two languages, three separate sciences and to gain vocational qualifications in a range of subjects. All students gain accreditation in ICT. The high standards in mathematics and ICT reflect the high level of commitment shown by the staff for leading improvement in connection with the school's specialism. Well-tailored and accredited off-site learning is provided for those who benefit from a more practical learning experience. Students enjoy a very extensive enrichment programme that includes many educational visits, a wide range of sports and the arts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care and support given to students is excellent. They recognise and appreciate the commitment that staff make to this, and know there are always staff they can go to with any issues or problems. The inclusion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. Pastoral staff and teaching assistants provide very effective support that enables these students to make excellent progress. Induction to the school is excellent and there are very close links with partner primary schools. Students appreciate the information and advice they are given at important transition times such as when choosing GCSE and post-16 options and also as they prepare to leave school. Academic guidance for students is strong and as a result they are fully aware of the challenging targets they are aiming for, their progress towards achieving them, and how to improve. This information is reported clearly to parents through a progress report early in the spring term and a full annual report in the summer term. The school meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding students but the health and safety policy has not been reviewed and updated.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and senior leadership team provide very clear direction. They are ably supported by an extremely strong and talented team of middle managers that implements school policies and initiates improvements very effectively. Managers, in turn, are supported by highly committed and capable staff with a very strong allegiance to the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and improvement planning is effectively informed by departmental reviews. There is a very robust system for setting challenging targets for students and monitoring their progress which has helped raise standards for all groups of learners. The performance management system for staff is well established and there are rigorous procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching. Support is provided where appropriate. Teachers' professional development is effectively linked to their individual needs and the school's priorities. The school promotes community cohesion well and the school community itself is warm and welcoming. An ethos of tolerance and encouragement pervades and students show a good understanding of other faiths, cultures and social groups. The school is well thought of in the local community and has excellent relationships with the vast majority of parents. It works outstandingly well with outside organisations to promote the well-being of students. Governors provide good support and challenge. They are well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development but procedures for the review, evaluation and updating of some policies are not well embedded. Staff are deployed extremely effectively and resources are very carefully managed to support the excellent achievement and personal development of students. The school provides outstanding value for money.

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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?	1	1
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?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

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	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

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

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	1	
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	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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 contributing to the recent inspection of the school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. Sacred Heart is an outstanding school of which you can be extremely proud. Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- You make outstanding progress from entering to leaving the main school – much better than that of students in similar schools. GCSE results have been well above the national average for a number of years and sixth formers make excellent progress given their GCSE qualifications on entry.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers plan lessons very well and you show a keen and lively interest in your learning. You answer and ask questions very confidently and make excellent contributions to lessons.
- The curriculum is outstanding and you have a very wide and appropriate range of options from which to choose in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The enrichment programme is particularly impressive.
- You are prepared very well for life when you leave school. Your behaviour is outstanding and you contribute extremely well to both the life of the school and the wider community. Your personal development and well-being is outstanding.
- You are very well supported in school and you receive excellent academic guidance and support. Your progress against target grades is very closely monitored and help is provided quickly where necessary. The school is a very caring environment. However, we would like the school to pay more attention to its health and safety policy to make sure that it is up to date.
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The senior leadership team is very strong and is supported by extremely capable middle managers and a very committed governing body.

We were very impressed with all aspects of the school but most especially by you, the students. We would like to congratulate you on being part of such an outstanding school and wish you well for the future.