

# Thornleigh Salesian College

Inspection report - amended

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105264
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	324192
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6-7 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen Wall

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>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1625
Sixth form	366
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Fr A Bailey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Alison Burrowes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 January 2006
<b>School address</b>	Sharples Park Astley Bridge Bolton Lancashire BL1 6PQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 301351
<b>Fax number</b>	01204 595351

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<b>Age group</b>	11-18
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## Amended Report Addendum

Amended number on roll

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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 that is under the trusteeship of Salesian of Don Bosco. Most students are of White British heritage. Consequently, the proportion with English as an additional language is low. Students come from backgrounds which generally reflect the national average for social and economic circumstances. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is at the national average. The sixth form takes in students from two other Catholic high schools as well as some other local secondary schools. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, although the number with a statement of special educational need is higher than normal. The headteacher was appointed in January 2008. Two new deputy headteachers have been recently appointed. The school achieved specialist school status as a sports college in September 2003. The school holds Investors in People status.

## 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 and improving school offering satisfactory value for money. There are significant strengths in students' personal development and well-being and in the care, guidance and support the school provides; both these areas are good.

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteachers, is leading the school purposefully and successfully out of an extended period when achievement and standards were not as high as they could have been in the main school. Targeted actions such as the more effective use of data to track students' progress mean that underachievement is now identified and tackled rigorously. At the same time, improved monitoring of the quality and impact of teaching on students' learning is enabling the school to concentrate its efforts more effectively on those areas which are not performing as well as they should. Provisional results for the 2008 Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations show significant improvement from previous years. This, and evidence gathered during the inspection confirm that students' achievement is now satisfactory. GCSE results in mathematics remain stubbornly low. Many parents have noted the improvements that have been brought about. 'I have seen strong evidence of many positive changes in the past 12 months or so', and 'We have been impressed and delighted in equal measure with the progress the school has made,' were typical comments. The impact of the actions taken by the school's leadership is obviously at an early stage but the significant improvement that has already taken place indicates that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Students say that their enjoyment of school is growing. 'Lessons are much more interesting than they used to be, so we enjoy learning much more,' was a telling comment. Behaviour in most lessons and around school is good. The number of exclusions has fallen significantly. Students are polite and respectful to each other and to adults. They move around the school sensibly and safely. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Students comment that they feel a valued part of the school community. They also show good levels of understanding and tolerance of other religions and cultures. They feel safe in school and have confidence in adults to help them deal with any difficulties or problems such as bullying. By the time they finish their compulsory schooling most students are confident and articulate young adults, who are soundly prepared for their future lives.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but too variable. Much is good or better and has a positive impact on students' learning and achievement. However, less effective teaching does not have the necessary pace or vitality to engage students fully in their learning. In these lessons, students' progress is too slow and their frustration expresses itself in disinterest. Teaching and learning in subjects related to the school's specialism are strong and, consequently, achievement is high. The satisfactory curriculum is improving as the school develops a wider range of options and qualifications more closely matched to students' needs in Key Stage 4.

Senior leaders and managers have acted quickly to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school so that they have an accurate picture of the priorities for action. Staff are responding enthusiastically to the positive leadership and morale is high. The quality and impact of subject management is too inconsistent. The process of holding middle managers more rigorously to account has started but is at an early stage for the full impact to be felt.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

Although the school judges the overall effectiveness of the sixth form as good, it is not better than satisfactory because students' achievement is satisfactory overall. From starting points which are broadly average, students make satisfactory progress to attain test results which are also broadly average. Some aspects of the sixth form are good. Carefully structured activities ensure good integration between the students who come from Year 11 and those joining from other schools. As a result, relationships are good and community cohesion is strong. Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy the sixth form and their commitment to the school community is strong. For example, they enjoy helping younger learners. There is a good range of post-16 courses carefully geared to students' expressed preferences. The quality of teaching varies considerably. Overall, it is satisfactory, although much is good or better. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The relative underperformance of some subjects is being tackled by improved monitoring and holding teachers and subject leaders more closely to account.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in the main school, especially in mathematics.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching in both the main school and the sixth form so that it is always at least good, particularly in relation to the pace of lessons.
- Make the quality and effectiveness of subject management across the school consistently effective in raising standards and achievement.

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

Students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is broadly average. In the past Key Stage 3 tests have been consistently below average though GCSE results were average. School targets were regularly missed, in some cases by a considerable margin. Provisional results for the 2008 Key Stage 3 tests, together with other inspection evidence, show a significant improvement in English and mathematics indicating stronger, satisfactory achievement. Demanding targets were met. Similarly, provisional results for 2008 GCSE examinations show significant improvement, indicating satisfactory achievement. The proportion of students attaining five or more A\* to C grades rose from 58 % in 2007 to 70% in 2008, very close to the school's demanding target. Despite strong GCSE performance in English, the proportion of students attaining five or more grades A\* to C including English and mathematics remained too low because of weaker results in mathematics. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve in line with other students.

Standards and achievement in subjects which are part of the school's specialism have consistently met demanding targets because of consistently good teaching.

Standards in the sixth form are broadly average. This represents satisfactory achievement in line with students' broadly average standards on entry to the sixth form.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. It is underpinned strongly by the school's strong Christian principles. Students understand right and wrong and the importance of respect. They value the opportunities they are given for spiritual reflection in lessons and assemblies. They are proud of the work they do for charities both locally and abroad. The school's specialist sports status plays an important role in students' understanding and adoption of healthy lifestyles. Very high numbers of students take advantage of the wide range of activities offered. Students value the opportunities they have to take on responsibilities such as by becoming prefects or working with younger, more vulnerable students. They also value the school council which represents their views and has brought about improvements to the school's facilities such as better computer resources and extensive seating around the school site. Students have plenty of opportunities to experience the world of work. However, their preparation for future economic well-being is no better than satisfactory because too many students leave school with mathematics qualifications which are not appropriate to their ability. Overall, attendance is satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving. The school has invested heavily in resources to support teaching such as information and communication technology (ICT). Students say that this has added extra interest to many lessons and has made their learning more enjoyable. Relationships in classrooms are strong. Teachers plan their lessons in detail. They are starting to use data effectively to match the tasks they set more closely to students' needs and abilities. The most effective teaching is conducted at a fast pace and challenges students to think for themselves. In these lessons students rise to the challenge and their enjoyment is written clearly on their faces. However, some lessons are too teacher-led. Students are expected to spend too long listening passively. Occasionally, lessons do not have enough variation to keep students interested; their attention wanders, behaviour deteriorates and the quality of learning suffers. Teachers mark students work regularly. Their comments are helpful in telling students how to improve their work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum is improving as the school extends its range of subjects and qualifications to meet more closely the needs of its students. For example, the choices, courses and pathways at Key Stage 4 include greater emphasis on vocational education including links with local colleges and other training providers. There is good provision for the most able students. For example, they can take examination courses in three separate sciences. They sit GCSEs at the end of Year 10 and start on their AS level studies in Year 11. Students say how much they enjoy the challenge of this arrangement. However, many of the curriculum initiatives are at an early stage and their full impact on raising standards and achievement has yet to be felt. The school has used its specialist status effectively to extend its range of extra-curricular activities which is very wide and very popular with the students. These, and activities such as

drama and music productions add significantly to students' enjoyment, health and levels of self-confidence.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides very effectively for students' welfare. Policies and procedures for safeguarding students are in place. Health and safety matters are given meticulous attention. Above all, it is the school's commitment to including all students, which characterises its approach to successful and effective support. The intervention centre, counsellors and the chaplaincy, for example, ensure that students experiencing difficulties are supported effectively and sensitively. The school has established good working relations with outside agencies to support students where necessary. Teaching assistants play an important role in supporting vulnerable students in lessons so that the progress they make matches that of the others. Effective transition links with feeder schools ensure students settle quickly when they join the school in Year 7 or the sixth form. Support and guidance for students' academic development is improving as more effective procedures for the use of assessment data start to bite. 'We understand better what we need to do to improve now. We feel more confident about our targets and know we'll get help if we fall behind,' was one student's summing up of the present situation.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher's positive and insightful leadership has brought about significant improvement in a short time. Emphasis on the effective use of data to track students' progress, monitoring of teaching and learning and holding subject managers more rigorously to account have already had a positive impact. Demanding yet realistic targets have been set in collaboration with staff who recognise how important it is to achieve them, both for the students and the school. Subject managers are becoming increasingly aware of their roles and responsibilities, although much remains to be done to improve the consistency of their approach and effectiveness. Leadership and management of the school's specialist status have been effective in raising standards and achievement in the specialist subjects. The school is now planning to extend its influence across all other subjects. Governors are now starting to hold the school much more rigorously to account. They are also keen to put the school at the centre of its local community. To this end, a recent open meeting with neighbours of the school was held to promote community cohesion.

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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	2	2

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	2
The attendance of learners	3	3
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	3

## The quality of provision

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

## 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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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 Thornleigh Salesian College, Bolton, BL1 6PQ

Thank you for making me and the other inspectors so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. I enjoyed meeting you and talking to many of you. What you told me was very helpful when discussing the effectiveness of your school.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory and improving quality of education in the main school and in the sixth form. We were very pleased to see that provisional test and examination results for 2008 in Key Stages 3 and 4 improved significantly and, although they could still be better, they reflected your abilities far more closely. However, GCSE results in mathematics were still too low. There is also too much variation in results between different subjects in the main school. We were also pleased to see how well you behave and how polite you are. The school takes very good care of you and is determined to make sure that standards and achievement go on rising to give you all the best start in life it can. We saw a lot of lessons. The quality of teaching and learning in them varied considerably. Many lessons really fired your imaginations and challenged your thinking. In other lessons, however, you were expected to do too much listening and soon got a bit bored.

Many of you told me what a positive impact your new headteacher has had on the school, and we agree. In a relatively short time, she has brought about a lot of improvements. However, she could not achieve this without your help and support, which she values highly. In order to make sure that your school continues to improve we are asking it to do three things.

- Make sure that standards and achievement rise further, especially in mathematics.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching in both the main school and the sixth form so that is always at least good, particularly in relation to the pace of learning.
- Help the managers of different subjects to become equally effective in raising standards and achievement in their areas.

We are confident that you will continue to help the school improve further by working hard and sharing your headteacher's desire for success.