

# Saint John Houghton Catholic School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113000
<b>Local Authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	325739
<b>Inspection date</b>	25 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anthony O'Malley 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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	617
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Stocks
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Bernard Monaghan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 January 2006
<b>School address</b>	Abbot Road Kirk Hallam Ilkeston Derbyshire DE7 4HX
<b>Telephone number</b>	0115 932 2896
<b>Fax number</b>	0115 944 5168

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects; achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, the curriculum and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from school documentation, discussions with governors, staff and students, and first-hand observations of lessons. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than most comprehensive schools. It is heavily over subscribed. The school achieved specialist status in science in 2005. Attainment on entry is above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is low. Most students are from a White British background. The school holds Anti-Bullying, Health Promoting, Eco Schools and International Schools awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Saint John Houghton provides good quality education. The aims of this Catholic school influence all aspects of school life including the science college ethos. The quality of the relationships between staff and students exemplifies these aims most clearly. The headteacher and senior leaders model the principles of fairness and integrity they expect to see in students. In turn, the student body fully meet the school's mission 'to be a family...with an awareness of its responsibilities to both local and worldwide communities'. Behaviour is outstanding and students and parents judge the school a delightful place to learn. One parent echoed the sentiments of many when she commented, 'I could not wish for anything better for my child. She returns home full of enthusiasm about her day. It is a wonderful school.'

Results in GCSE examinations have been significantly above average for the past three years. In 2008, 81% of students achieved five or more higher grade GCSEs and this was the highest percentage achieved to date. However, the proportion of students achieving five higher grades including English and mathematics dipped to 58%. This was below expectations and a result of some middle ability girls not achieving their expected grade in mathematics. The school acted promptly to tackle this issue, including personal mentoring for girl students in the present Year 11 at risk of underachieving. The school has also introduced a more detailed progress tracking system that shows current Year 11 students to be on course to surpass aspirational targets. The previous inspection identified the need to raise standards in art and design technology. It has met this challenge with outstanding success partly because of very effective partnerships with two specialist colleges. Standards in the school's own specialism, science, are high with 25% of students achieving A\* and A grades. Taken over three years, the achievement of students in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 has been good for all groups of learners. Lower ability students and students who find learning difficult make even better progress than other groups because the school ensures they receive high quality provision from both teachers and skilled learning support assistants.

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, are outstanding. A recent student survey shows that religious education is the most popular subject and organisations, such as the thriving 'Justice and Peace' group and 'Oasis' team, show how the values it promotes are acted upon to help lives of others both within the school and global communities. Students feel valued, safe and free from bullying. Their outstanding attendance reflects their enjoyment of school. Students are fully aware of how to live a healthy lifestyle, but at Key Stage 4, many of them receive just one hour of physical education a week. Students have a strong 'voice' in the school. Student councillors ensure that the views of students are shared with staff and many others have opportunities to take responsibility in the daily life of the school. The science specialism also provides outstanding opportunities for the students to make a positive contribution to the community. For example, the Eco group is currently working on a moorland challenge investigating the quality of peat deposits and a second group are monitoring, evaluating and reviewing energy consumption in school. Taken together, the high academic standards and exceptional personal development mean that the students are outstandingly well prepared for their futures.

Teaching and learning are good. Reliable monitoring records show a steadily improving profile over time. The most effective teachers make learning active and enjoyable by encouraging students to work together and share their ideas. They use new technologies to enrich the content of lessons and, for example, in science and mathematics, to develop the students'

understanding of more difficult concepts. Visits to lessons during the inspection demonstrated that assessment for learning strategies increasingly feature in classroom practice. Activities closely match the needs of the students and when offering answers or accounts, teachers expect students to give extended responses and explain their reasoning. However, this practice is not yet consistent throughout all departments because assessment for learning is not fully embedded. In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning slows because teachers direct the learning too much and students tend to be passive learners. On other occasions teachers miss opportunities to use information and communication technology to enrich learning.

The curriculum is good. It meets all statutory requirements. The school is aware that the range of vocational courses available at Key Stage 4 requires further development. Specialist status is contributing effectively to improving overall standards and although the specialist targets were not all met, last year results in science at GCSE were high and the newly introduced triple science option is proving to be both very popular and successful. The specialism is particularly effective in promoting community cohesion. Courses popular with both parents and the local community include Keep Fit, Family Healthy Cooking and Mother and Baby Support. The school has formed excellent partnerships with SureStart and other providers to advertise and deliver these courses. The humanities too are strong aspects of the school's provision. Work in citizenship and personal, social and health education contributes greatly to the students' outstanding personal development.

Care, guidance and support in the school are outstanding. Parents particularly value this aspect of the school's provision. Students respond well to the systems of rewards and value highly the work of the full time lay chaplain, who is also the child protection coordinator. Fixed term exclusions are very low and there have been no permanent exclusions in the last two years.

The quality of leadership and management is good. Senior leaders, including governors, have established a community where staff and students give of their best because they are inspired by the moral purpose that is at the heart of all the school does. Staff surveys provide evidence of the staff's high morale and the good quality of continuing professional development. Self-evaluation is good and the prompt action taken following a dip in girls' performance at GCSE in 2008, shows that the school has good capacity to improve.

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

- Improve the consistency in teaching by ensuring all teachers use assessment for learning strategies and make effective use of information and communication technology.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

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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>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
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**

26 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St John Houghton Catholic School, Derbyshire, DE7 4HX

Thank you for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed my visit, especially my discussions with some of you and seeing you at work in lessons. This letter is to tell you my main findings.

You said how much you enjoyed school, respected your teachers and appreciated the friendly and positive atmosphere for learning. I agree with you and your teachers, that your good school is a delightful place to teach and learn. I was particularly impressed with the care, guidance and support provided for you, and the commitment of all adults to ensure that you achieve well and enjoy your time at school. Your behaviour and personal development are outstanding. Results in GCSEs in each of the last three years have been high and the progress you make is good. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are good. They both contribute well to your outstanding personal development. The work of the student council, the 'Justice and Peace' group and 'Oasis' are just three examples of the many things you are doing to improve both your own school and the lives of others. I am pleased that so many of you are learning about other cultures through international contacts and visits that give you first hand understanding of other cultures.

All of you benefit from the headteacher's ambition that you achieve well academically and grow into generous, confident and responsible citizens. Supported by an effective senior leadership team and governors, he gives the school good leadership. Together they are committed to continuing to improve your school. I have asked teachers to use assessment for learning strategies and make effective use of information and communication technology so that you are consistently motivated and learn at a fast pace. By continuing to attend regularly, behave so well and express your views through the student council and regular perceptions surveys you will help them achieve this goal.

Best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley

Her Majesty's Inspector