

# St John Payne Catholic Comprehensive School, Chelmsford

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 115238            |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Essex             |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 326158            |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 20 November 2008  |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Mark Phillips 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>                | 11–18  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School (total)                            | 1152   |
| Sixth form                                | 200  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                                   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr Mike Hiom   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mr Frank McEvoy                                      |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 5 October 2005                                       |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Patching Hall Lane<br>Chelmsford<br>Essex<br>CM1 4BS |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01245 256030   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01245 352337   |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector in one day. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the sixth form, and investigated the following issues.

- How high are standards and how well do students achieve, given their starting points when they join the school and sixth form?
- How well does provision in teaching and learning, and the curriculum, meet the needs, interests and abilities of students?
- How well have leaders and managers monitored and evaluated the school's performance and brought about improvements since the last inspection?

Evidence was taken from assessment data, school documents, visits to a range of lessons around the school, joint lesson observations with senior leaders, visits to assemblies, observation of students at break-time, scrutiny of students' work in classrooms, parental questionnaires, meetings with senior staff and the Chair of Governors, and lunchtime discussions with members of the school council and student representatives from the sixth form.

## Description of the school

St John Payne is a large voluntary aided comprehensive school, situated in the Patching Hall ward of Chelmsford but with students coming from a wide area in mid Essex. When admitting students, the school gives priority to Catholic families and those seeking a Christian education. Nine out of every ten students are Catholic. The majority are from White British backgrounds and almost all have English as their first language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average; the majority of these students are dyslexic or have moderate learning difficulties. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Fewer than average move into or out of the school during their secondary education.

St John Payne has been a specialist technology college since September 2003. In April 2008, the school took up a second specialism as a Leadership Partnership School, with a focus on developing leadership potential both within St John Payne and in other local authority schools. The school was awarded Investors in People accreditation in 2001, with re-accreditation in 2003 and 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

As at the time of its last inspection, St John Payne Catholic Comprehensive is a good school. It is characterised by a strong sense of community and bound by a distinct Catholic ethos, both of which help students make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An exceptionally high number of parents replied to the inspection questionnaire, and the overwhelming majority are very pleased. As one parent said, praising the school; 'I am a strong believer in good values as well as good education standards'. Another added, 'my son feels part of a strong community and he is proud to be part of his school'.

Joining Year 7 with standards that are generally above average, students make good progress throughout their time at the school to achieve standards that are firmly above average overall, both at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. Standards are exceptionally high, and students progress particularly well, in business studies, French and geography. The proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics is above average, and the proportion achieving these passes in total is well above average. However, the proportion of A\* and A grades is only broadly average. In 2008, boys attained higher standards than girls compared to similar students nationally; boys also made better progress than did girls. However, these differences are not significant. Students who find learning difficult make good progress.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Typically, teachers have good subject knowledge, plan lessons well and present ideas clearly. In the best lessons, the focus is on providing activities that keep students busy and interested, helping them to make good progress. However, there remain lessons where too much emphasis is on teacher-presentation, the whole class moves at the same pace, and students are not active enough. Books are marked regularly, although not always in enough detail. Students' compliant behaviour in lessons helps their learning and contributes to good working relationships with their teachers. Whilst there has been difficulty in recruiting for some teaching positions recently, it is to the school's credit that it has appropriately qualified staff in place to teach all classes until permanent appointments are made. Overall, the curriculum is also good. There is good provision for literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT), and good programmes of religious education and citizenship that meet all statutory requirements. Key Stage 4 students are able to choose from a full range of academic GCSE subjects. All students take a technology subject at GCSE, reflecting the school's specialist status. However, whilst the school is preparing well for the new 14 to 19 diplomas, at present there is still a limited range of vocational courses, or additional qualifications for the more able, in Key Stage 4. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, despite restricted facilities for physical education and drama.

Students' personal development is outstanding. They greatly enjoy coming to school, and their attendance is good. Behaviour, too, is good, and the number of students excluded for poor behaviour is low. Students make outstanding contributions to their communities. There is involvement and voluntary work with the Catholic community, other primary and secondary schools through specialist college status, and a particularly good liaison with a local special school. They make considerable contributions to charity and those in need through, for example, Operation Christmas Child. Their excellent understanding of community cohesion is underpinned by their exceptional spiritual and moral development, and their knowledge of world beliefs and cultures through outstanding work in geography and religious studies. Students have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles, and are well prepared for their futures.

The care, guidance and support offered to students is good, with some outstanding features, including a strong system for pastoral care. The great majority of students feel safe in school, and all requirements for safeguarding are in order. However, a small minority of parents expressed concerns about bullying, including on the journeys to and from school. Whilst reported incidents of bullying are few and are always dealt with promptly and appropriately, the school acknowledges that it needs to increase students' confidence in reporting all bullying, either to teachers or to sixth form mentors.

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher gives resolute but also gracious leadership to the school and, quite rightly, he is held in high esteem across the school community. He is supported by an established senior team, each with clear areas of expertise. Together, they work hard to maintain good standards of education and care for students. Middle managers are regularly held to account for their areas of responsibility. However, whole-school self-evaluation is overgenerous. Whilst agreeing with the school's judgements on students' personal development and the effectiveness of the sixth form, inspectors do not support the view that every single aspect of the school is outstanding. Sharpening whole-school self-evaluation, more accurately balancing strengths and areas where improvement is required, is a key area for further development to help the school better identify what it needs to do to become outstanding overall. More incisive lesson observations, giving teachers clearer guidance on how to further improve students' learning, remains a priority from the last inspection. Governance is good overall, although again governors do not take an active enough role in school self-evaluation. Nevertheless, progress in some individual GCSE subjects and in the sixth form where, significantly, students have been involved in helping managers identify areas for development, gives confidence that the school has good capacity for further improvement. Financial management is sound and the school provides good value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

Sixth form results have improved significantly since the last inspection. The prior attainment of students staying on into Year 12 is in line with the national average for those starting A level studies. However, in their final examinations, standards are on average half a grade higher than those achieved by students nationally. In 2007 and 2008, almost two thirds of all A level results were graded A or B, which represents remarkable progress. The success of the sixth form is not just about the highest attaining students, though. Students who do not have the necessary qualifications to start A level courses are, nonetheless, welcomed and provided with a good range of suitable options. Students are generous in their praise of the time and effort that teachers put into their lessons, preparing them for their examinations, and supporting their academic progress. Their personal development, which is also outstanding, is promoted by an outstanding curriculum that provides them with broader experiences such as general studies, religious education, ICT, and thinking skills.

In 2008, every student that made a university application secured their first or second choice place without having to go to clearing, because of the excellent results achieved. Nevertheless, Year 13 students currently in the school say they would welcome greater support and guidance through the university applications process. Similarly, whilst they are rightly proud of their leadership work in school, which makes a significant contribution to what one student called 'our SJP family', they are right to ask for more responsibility to manage their own private study time in Year 12.

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

- Further raise standards in Key Stage 4 to enable groups of students in lessons and examinations to make outstanding progress consistently across the school.
- Sharpen the quality of self-evaluation, including the monitoring of teaching and learning, so that leaders and managers, including governors, have a clearer understanding about how to achieve the highest standards in all areas of the school's work.

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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> |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|

**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> | 2   | 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?  | 2   | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 2   | 2   |

**Achievement and standards**

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 | 1 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 2 | 1 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 1 |
| 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>                          | 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   | 2 |   |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education  | 1 |   |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 |   |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |   |
| 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 | 2 |   |

## The quality of provision

|  |   |                 |
|--|---|-----------------|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 2 | IE <sup>2</sup> |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 1               |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 2 | IE <sup>2</sup> |

## Leadership and management

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   | 1   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   |     |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 2   |     |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 3   | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated   | 2   |     |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?   | 1   |     |
| 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 | 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**

21 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of St John Payne Catholic Comprehensive School, CM1 4BS

As you may recall, a colleague and I visited recently to check on your school's progress since its last inspection, three years ago. As in 2005, we think that St John Payne is a good school, with a particularly special community feel to it. Overall, your exam results in Year 9 and Year 11 are well above the national average and you make good progress in your studies considering the standard of your work when you join the school. Overall, you are taught well, and you have a good range of subjects to choose from, although we would like to see an even wider range of options in Key Stage 4. One of the most important reasons for your exam successes, and for your outstanding personal qualities, is your attitude to learning. In every classroom we visited we saw you showing respect for your teachers and a willingness to learn and work. I congratulate you for this most heartily because it means that, in your lessons, your teachers are able to get on with teaching and you are able to get on with learning without unnecessary distractions. Well done, indeed.

Since the last inspection, results in the sixth form have really improved and are now outstanding. You can read more detail in my main report, and again I congratulate students and teachers for their excellent achievement. To help the main school match this, I have asked Mr McEvoy and the school to do two things.

- Bring standards up to the highest level in all GCSE subjects. This includes making sure that both boys and girls make equally good progress, and helping you to earn more A\* and A grades.
- Making sure that the school evaluates its work more effectively. This includes keeping a closer eye on the quality of your lessons, to make sure that you are always learning as well as you can.

These are not just targets for your teachers - you and your parents have an equally important role to play in making an even better school. Thank you for your part in the school's success so far, and please thank your parents too for the excellent support that they give Mr McEvoy and his team as they lead the 'SJP family'.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips

Her Majesty's Inspector