

Saint Aidans Church of England Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119789
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327129
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Linda Tetik 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	828
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Taylor
Headteacher	Mr Alan Porteous
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
School address	Cartgate Preesall Poulton-le-Fylde Lancashire FY6 0NP
Telephone number	01253 810504
Fax number	01253 810244

Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Inspection number	327129

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Saint Aidan's is a Church of England Technology College with specialist status for technology, science and mathematics. It is a smaller than average voluntary aided school serving a mixed rural and urban community near the Fylde coast. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is significantly below the national average and mobility is low. Most students are White British and very few have English as an additional language. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very low, but increasing. The percentage of students with statements has fallen and is low. The school gained the Healthy Schools Award in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Saint Aidan's Church of England Technology College provides students with a good quality education. Students enter the school with above average standards and very good transition arrangements ensure they settle in quickly. By the end of Key Stage 3, they attain standards that are well above average. There was a slight dip in attainment at five GCSE A* to C including English and mathematics in 2008, but the school has resolved the issues that led to this. The most recent school data and inspection evidence indicate that current standards are well above average, students' progress is good and students are on track to achieve challenging targets. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support and this enables them to make good progress. Specialist status makes a strong contribution to the standards achieved by students and to the provision across the school. Standards at GCSE are high in the specialist subjects, especially in mathematics and graphics. A high number of students go on to study mathematics at further education colleges.

The harmonious relationships within the school community support students' good personal development and high levels of achievement. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and students show respect for each other and school property. This is a happy caring community where students say they feel safe. A very high percentage of parents responded to the questionnaire and they were overwhelmingly positive, confirming the students' views. The curriculum is outstanding. Recent improvements ensure that it effectively meets the needs of different groups of learners and this is having a significant impact on raising standards. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons teachers plan interesting tasks and use assessment well so that students understand their targets and how to improve their work. In some lessons this is less well developed. Leadership and management at all levels are good and school self-evaluation and improvement planning is keenly focused on raising achievement and improving teaching and learning. However, these improvement strategies are not yet consistently well embedded. The school has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and the school's capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- For senior and middle leaders to further embed improvement strategies consistently across the school.
- Ensure that teachers use assessment so that all students understand their targets and how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are well above average and students' achievement is good. Students join the school with standards that are above average. Over the last three years, results at Key Stage 3 have been well above average and progress has been generally satisfactory and good in some subjects. Performance in GCSE examinations has been well above average in recent years. In 2008 the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades was maintained at 67%. Those gaining five or more A* to C passes including English and mathematics dipped to 55%, in the main due to the underperformance of a small group of female students. Virtually all students gained at least five A* to G passes, and none left school without a qualification. The 2008 GCSE results signalled that students' progress from Year 7 to Year 11 was satisfactory. Students

achieved best in art, mathematics, science, English literature and least well in drama, music and physical education. The school has taken positive steps to improve its performance and resolve staffing issues. Inspection evidence shows that currently students are making good progress in lessons across the school. Modular results already achieved in mathematics and science show improved performance. The school's systematic tracking of students' progress indicates that it is on course to meet most its challenging targets for examinations in 2009. All groups of students are achieving well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Those interviewed were appreciative of the way in which they are trusted to lead initiatives. By the time students reach Year 11 they are mature, responsible and sensitive to others. The school council provides a strong voice for students, giving them a good appreciation of the democratic process. They say their views are respected and are particularly proud about the changes they have made to the refectory menu. Students feel safe in school and value the way in which tutor groups include students of all ages. They say 'we really care for each other', and are keen to emphasise the very positive relationships they have with each other and their teachers. They enjoy coming to school and this results in good attendance. Students understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and many take up extra sport. Students' involvement in raising money for charities and their work on producing a DVD about local community facilities for young people demonstrates a positive contribution to the community. Their good attitudes and well developed numeracy and literacy skills will support them well through the next stage of their education and in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons teachers use a range of interesting activities and information and communication technology so students are engaged actively in their learning. Lively and challenging teaching are common features in good lessons and ensure that students learn at a good pace. In the outstanding lessons students are encouraged and empowered to work and think independently. Although there is a consistent approach to planning which enables students to understand what they will learn in each lesson they are sometimes less sure of what they need to do to achieve a particular grade or level. This is because learning targets are not always understood by students or reviewed regularly enough by teachers to drive forward improvement. Teachers use questions effectively to ascertain what students know but not always to challenge them to extend their thinking. Students are becoming more involved in the assessment of their own and each others' work, building their confidence and helping them to improve. This is particularly evident in the specialist subjects. In less successful lessons, teachers talk too much so that students spend too little time learning for themselves and with other students. In some classes homework is not used to extend understanding or to consolidate learning. Teaching assistants are used well to support those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

An outstanding curriculum effectively meets the needs of different groups of students, and is helping to raise standards, particularly through the impact of the specialist college status. Students identified as gifted and talented take separate science courses in Key Stage 4 where results in 2008 were well above average. There is a good focus on basic skills' development for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enabling these learners to progress well. Students who have English as an additional language also achieve well due to good support. Provision in Key Stage 4 for students who find a wholly academic curriculum challenging, or who are disaffected with school generally is effective. A day spent in college or on work-placement enhances work done in school and helps transition into further education. Vocational provision is excellent. Approximately half of Key Stage 4 students take at least one vocational subject. New vocational courses in Key Stage 4, for example, in sport, health and social care and music have increased motivation and raised students' aspirations. Enterprise education is very strong and there are very good links with local employers and organisations such as the Rotary Club. Support for students' personal development through citizenship is good. Enrichment activities and extra-curricular provision, including a circus skills activity, are outstanding and well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Students are well cared for and most receive good academic guidance. The pastoral house system is very popular with parents and students and helps engender strong community spirit. Transition arrangements from feeder primary schools, involving trained senior students, are excellent. Vulnerable students receive good personal support from mentors and through links with outside agencies. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants, the homework club and the lunchtime provision such as the Parachute Club. Students say they feel safe in school where they say that the few incidents of bullying that happen are dealt with effectively. Arrangements for safeguarding students are in line with recent legislation. New support arrangements for students on the borderline of achieving a higher grade at GCSE are having a positive impact. In most lessons students receive good guidance, but sometimes marking is not always helpful in telling students how to improve. Although most students know what their end of key stage targets are and what they have to do to achieve them, this is not consistent in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the able headteacher sets a clear direction and vision for the school which is shared by all the school community. The effective senior leadership team and middle managers provide good support to the headteacher. Together, they have made good progress in addressing the issues identified at the previous inspection and this is having an impact on raising standards. However, improvements are not yet firmly embedded in all areas. Tracking systems to monitor student progress and target setting systems are in place, with challenging targets being set for students. These are beginning to be used effectively to identify underachievement and to put in place interventions but are not always

used as effectively in the classroom. The curriculum has been strengthened. Good quality assurance systems have been developed and are beginning to be used with effect. Staffing issues have mostly been resolved. Strategies to share best practice, to coach and mentor staff across the school are developing through the exemplifications evident in the specialist areas. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and all groups of learners make good progress. Governors play an active role in the school and have a good understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement and are beginning to hold the school to account effectively. Arrangements to promote community cohesion are developing. There have been recent exchanges with schools in South Africa, good partnerships with local schools and growing links with the local community. The school recognises that further opportunities for students to engage with partners at a national level are needed. The school provides good value for money and there is good capacity to improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
The attendance of learners	2
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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**

12 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Saint Aidan's Church of England Technology College, Lancashire, FY6 ONP

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. My colleagues and I enjoyed meeting you during the inspection. You were polite, welcoming and your behaviour was good. We would particularly like to thank those of you who spoke to us. We also were impressed by the positive response from your parents in the very high number of questionnaires returned.

We judged your school to be good and here are a few examples of what we found.

- Most of you are making good progress.
- The quality of teaching you enjoy is generally good.
- You are proud of your school and care for the school environment.
- Your headteacher and senior managers lead the school well.
- There are good relationships within the school community.
- The school provides an outstanding curriculum and an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
- You receive good care and you feel safe in school.

We have asked the school to make sure that:

- you experience even more of the best lessons where teachers use assessment well to plan your work and give you good guidance about how to improve.

You can help your school by maintaining your good behaviour and your good attendance. I wish you all well in your future careers, and happy and fulfilled lives.

Yours sincerely

Linda Tetik HMI

Lead inspector