

St Cecilia's RC Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119800
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327135
Inspection date	16 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Garry Jones 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)	471
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Paul Mitcheson
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Diffley
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Chapel Hill Longridge Preston Lancashire PR3 2XA
Telephone number	01772 783074
Fax number	01772 782600

Age group	11–16
Inspection date	16 December 2008
Inspection number	327135

© Crown copyright 2008

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. The inspector reviewed school documentation, observed the daily routine of the school including teaching and held discussions with senior staff, students and the chair of governors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how well the curriculum meets the needs of all students, the quality of care, guidance and support and the impact of leadership and management in using the specialist college status to bring about improvement. 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 were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school that serves the community of Longridge, the surrounding rural district and areas of North Preston. The area overall has above average social and economic characteristics, but a significant proportion of students are drawn from areas with considerable deprivation. Despite this the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is low. The students are predominantly of White British origin and the proportion of students from other minority ethnic groups is below the national average. A small number of students are at an early stage of learning English. The school is a specialist college for technology and a Teacher Learning Academy school. It has the Investors in People award, the International School Award, national Healthy School status and is a Young Enterprise centre.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Its Catholic ethos, small size and a strong focus on inclusion have created a harmonious and welcoming community in which students flourish. This is reflected in their outstanding personal development. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is of an extremely high standard. The small number of students from other countries and cultures are very well integrated into the school. Students speak warmly of how much they value their education. This view is shared by the vast majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire. The overwhelming majority of students attend regularly and are punctual to their lessons. They have excellent relationships with the staff and show care and consideration for each other. Their behaviour is excellent and reflects their very well developed social skills. Students are exceptionally well aware of how to remain safe and healthy. They make a positive contribution to the school community through the school council and by older students taking on positions of responsibility. In addition, the wider community benefits from their extensive charity fundraising, musical performances and links with the church.

The pastoral care of the students is outstanding. Staff know the students extremely well. When students are facing difficulties they are confident that there is always a member of staff to turn to and they report that staff give of their time freely to help them. Students report that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with very effectively and there is an established system of peer mentoring to support individuals. An effective team of year heads monitors rigorously the personal development of the students. There are regular reports to parents on how well their children are working. When individuals are falling short of the very high expectations of the school there are well developed systems to encourage them to do better. There is effective support for the most vulnerable students and appropriate links are in place to draw on the expertise of external agencies when required. The transition from primary school is very well managed and this allows students to settle quickly. There is a well developed system of guidance to advise students on courses at Key Stage 4 and on destinations post- 16. Students who are new to the school, including those from other European countries, are supported well. Indeed an additional part-time member of staff has been appointed to support the members of a small Polish community. There are extremely well developed systems to ensure the health and safety of students and current government regulations on safeguarding are followed.

Academic guidance is good. Each student has an individual target for each subject and the vast majority are well aware of what they are aiming for. Progress against targets is reviewed each term and students report that they are given clear guidance on what they have to do to improve. Heads of department monitor the progress of students each term to identify any underachievement and additional support is provided when necessary. Information on the progress of students in Key Stage 3 is collated centrally each year, but there is no formal mechanism for monitoring individual progress across all subjects more frequently.

Students enter the school with standards of attainment that are just above those found nationally. At the end of Key Stage 3 students attain standards in the national tests that are well above average and have been so consistently from 2005 to 2007. The unvalidated results for 2008 indicate that this position has been maintained. Results in the GCSE examinations have improved for the last three years. The proportion gaining five or more passes at grades A* to C which include English and mathematics is significantly above that found nationally. Almost every student leaves with five or more passes at GCSE. The progress that students make is good and this reflects the impact of the specialist college status on driving improvement.

Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. The students meet the vast majority of specialist college targets and where targets are missed this represents a very small number of students.

The good achievement of students reflects the overall good quality of teaching within the school. The quality of teaching is reinforced by the very good relationships that exist between teachers and students. It is characterised by lessons that are well planned and have clear learning objectives. There is very effective use of technology to enhance learning which has been a priority for development through the specialist status. A good range of teaching strategies is employed and students report that their enjoyment of learning is enhanced by the variety of approaches adopted. Teachers make good use of their questioning skills to assess learning. The result is that students enjoy lessons, concentrate well and make good progress. Teachers mark work regularly and the best marking provides detailed guidance to students on how to improve their work, but this is not yet consistent in all subjects.

The curriculum is good and supports the learning and personal development of students well. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets all statutory requirements. A particular strength, that reflects the specialist status of the school, is the provision of sufficient time for all technology subjects to embed the skills required for pursuing these subjects at Key Stage 4. The school has a good range of pathways for students in Key Stage 4. The academic route includes a compulsory technology subject which can be chosen from an extensive range. In addition there is a good range of vocational courses delivered in conjunction with local colleges. Although these are currently lower level qualifications a land-based studies diploma is to be introduced in 2009. A personalised curriculum with a significant work-based component is in place for a small number of students. There is good provision for all students to develop work-based learning skills through work experience, links with local industries and enterprise projects.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has an exceptionally clear vision for the school and her determined and purposeful leadership has resulted in consistent improvement. She is ably supported by an extended senior leadership team. A clear focus on distributed leadership is paying dividends in developing the consistency of middle management within the school. The use of challenging targets has resulted in a steady improvement in standards at Key Stage 4 and the maintenance of high standards at Key Stage 3. The processes of self-evaluation are accurate and are resulting in the identification of clear and appropriate priorities for development. The specialist status has been used well to contribute to raising standards and to improving the quality of teaching. The shared sense of purpose and the proven record of sustained improvement reflect outstanding capacity for improvement. There are good partnerships with local schools, colleges and other agencies. The links with the local community of primary schools have been effectively enhanced by the specialist college status. The school is well supported by its governing body which also provides appropriate levels of challenge when required. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that marking consistently provides detailed advice to students on how to improve their work.
- Review the system of academic monitoring to ensure that the analysis of all departments' data on students' progress in Key Stage 3 provides a more regular overview of each individual's progress.

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	1

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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**

17 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of St Cecilia's RC Technology College, Lancashire, PR3 2XA

You may remember that I completed an inspection of your school recently. I would like to thank those of you who shared with me your views on the school. I enjoyed observing your work in some lessons and talking to you about your studies.

St Cecilia's is a good school. You make good progress during your school career and achieve standards in your examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 which are well above the national average. The number of you that attain five or more good passes at GCSE that include English and mathematics is high. This is because the quality of teaching is good. The range of courses you can study at Key Stage 4 is good and you receive a good introduction to technology through the range of subjects you study in Key Stage 3. You are very well cared for by the staff of the school. They know you well and you told me that they help you willingly. Your personal development is outstanding; you enjoy school, attend regularly and behave exceptionally well.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and her senior team have established a clear vision for the school and the priorities for its further improvement. To help the school I have suggested that they make sure that the marking of your work in all subjects gives you clear advice on how to improve it. I have also suggested that they collect together the departments' information on your progress against your targets in Key Stage 3 more regularly so that they can see how well you are doing in all your subjects.

You can help the school to continue to improve by continuing to behave well, attend regularly and work hard.

Best wishes for the future.

Garry Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector