

St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School, Billington

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119801
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327136
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Janet Palmer 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)	1055
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Willoughby
Headteacher	Mr Anthony McNamara
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2006
School address	Elker Lane Billington Clitheroe Lancashire BB7 9JA
Telephone number	01254 823362
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Augustine's is a larger than average Roman Catholic high school for students aged 11 to 16. Most students travel to the school from the Ribble Valley and surrounding areas of Lancashire. The great majority of students are White British. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average. The school population is stable with few students joining after Year 7. The school gained specialist science status in 2003 and a second specialism in languages in 2008. St Augustine's has High Performing Specialist School status and holds Investors in People, Healthy School, and Eco School awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Augustine's is a good school with many outstanding features. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school which is communicated effectively and shared with the whole school community. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly and strongly supportive of the school, which has an excellent reputation locally. As a result, applications have risen steadily and the school is heavily oversubscribed. The comment from one parent that the school, 'quietly and without fuss or acclaim, supports families and changes peoples' lives,' is typical of the views of many. In this nurturing environment students achieve well and standards are above the national average. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. There is a well established and rigorously monitored programme of pastoral and academic mentoring which positively impacts on students' achievement and personal development. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the outstanding support they receive. Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. The students' very good attitudes to learning and their excellent behaviour help them make good progress in lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use well to promote learning.

Students are well served by an increasingly diverse and innovative curriculum. Students benefit from the school's recent curriculum developments, for example, Year 7 themed days; Year 9 award-bearing courses in information and communication technology (ICT); and collaborative projects such as the geography and science weather station. Students develop a good understanding of how to stay safe and maintain their health and well-being through a well developed programme of personal, social, health and economic education. The very wide range of extra-curricular options contributes to students' outstanding personal development. Overseas visits, trips and residential breaks contribute well to students' excellent social and cultural development and are well funded to ensure equality of opportunity. Attendance is well above the national average reflecting the students' enjoyment of school and the enhancement of family and community life that St Augustine's successfully provides.

The governing body is outstandingly effective in supporting, monitoring and challenging the school. It ensures that statutory requirements, including child protection and health and safety measures, are met. Resources are deployed efficiently and effectively although provision for physical education is somewhat limited by the lack of a sports hall and poorly drained playing fields.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the school's effective improvement strategies to enable more students to make outstanding progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When students enter the school in Year 7 their attainment is slightly above the national average. During their time at St Augustine's their achievement is good and the standards they attain at the end of each key stage are above average. Since the last inspection there has been a steady improvement in attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, particularly in English, so that progress is good and standards are now securely above average in English, mathematics and science. Attainment at Key Stage 4 has been consistently above average. The school's improved monitoring systems have enabled it quickly to identify and address the areas of weakness and

as a result students are now making better progress and reliable school data shows standards are rising at Key Stage 4 to meet challenging targets. The school met its specialist school targets for Key Stage 3 and met most of its targets for Key Stage 4 with the exception of the A* to C percentage pass rate in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Excellent pastoral care nurtures students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The chapel in school provides a quiet haven for reflection and prayers. Relationships between students are very good and behaviour is exceptional in and around school. Students show respect for each other, for staff and for visitors. This extends to demonstrating concern for those less fortunate through a multitude of fundraising activities for local, national and international charities. Students demonstrate their understanding of healthy lifestyles. The active and high profile student council has had an input into healthy choices of food at lunchtimes. The 'safe, calm, caring environment' described by students was clearly evident during the inspection. Student mentors work well with new entrants, helping them settle into school life. On the rare occasions that bullying occurs it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by the school. Preparation for the workplace and for the future economic well-being of students is outstanding. Students have developed excellent social and workplace skills such as group work, problem solving, speaking and listening. The great majority progress onto further education or training and there are many examples of graduates returning to school during a gap year to support current students.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour to which students respond very positively. Strong relationships and mutual respect underpin teaching and learning so that lesson time is used effectively. Students enjoy participating in lessons because they know their contributions will be valued. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to lessons, providing outstanding support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has made good use of its specialist school status to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, for example through the increased use of ICT. Interactive white boards are frequently used to get lessons off to a lively start. Students make good use of independent learning software in school and at home to reinforce and extend learning and improve the quality of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum because it knows its students well and plans for their varying needs. The extra-curricular provision is outstanding. Developments in the curriculum at Key Stage 3 have broadened the range of options and introduced study at GCSE level for students in Year 9. At Key Stage 4 students have access to a good range of academic and vocational options linked to the school's specialist college status. These include: 3 separate sciences, plus astronomy and vocational science; 4 modern languages, plus 'mother tongue' qualifications for students with English as an additional language. Courses in, for instance,

equine care and motor vehicle maintenance; and enhancements such as the Duke of Edinburgh award and cooking for pleasure, add interest and choice to the broad provision. Alternative curriculum arrangements for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very effective in raising standards and enhancing their personal development. The needs of able, gifted and talented students are well met through a variety of activities including motivational workshops, master classes and visits to institutions of higher education. The many sports, clubs and special interest activities such as the swing band and debating group, successfully help students broaden their horizons and further develop their social skills. All students have good access to work-related education through well managed work experience and enterprise projects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support for students are exemplary. The school makes very good use of its sophisticated tracking system to identify and address underperformance and to celebrate good and better progress. The school's holistic approach to pastoral care and guidance extends to external agencies, resulting in a truly comprehensive package of support. As a result, the most vulnerable students make exceptional progress. Students know their individual targets and the vast majority are well aware of what they are aiming for. Students say that there is always a member of staff to turn to and because 'teachers put so much effort in, we want to do well for them.' There is a well developed system of guidance to advise students on courses at Key Stage 4, post 16 and beyond. Parents and carers recognise the value of the 'caring and committed staff from the top downwards...who nurture and inspire' their children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with outstanding features. The school's mission to 'encourage, inspire, challenge and care for each other' is exemplified by the headteacher and shared by the staff who have a very strong sense of common purpose. The senior leadership team is small but works very well with middle managers who are committed to moving the school forward. Advantage has been taken of the school's specialisms and range of partnerships to manage improvements in resources, teaching and the curriculum, demonstrating an excellent capacity for further improvement. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and rigorous involving staff, governors and other partners. There is a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. More challenging targets are now being used to improve performance so that progress in lessons is now good at both key stages and standards are consistently above average. The school is very inclusive and makes strenuous efforts to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination. This is central to the school's ethos. The school also makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion through a range of local, national and international partnerships, including developing links with a multi ethnic school in a deprived part of Pendle.

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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	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	1

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	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

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	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	1
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	1
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**

23 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School, Billington, Lancashire, BB7 9JA

As you know, your school was inspected recently. I would like to begin by thanking you for making the team of inspectors feel so welcome. Our discussions with you were particularly useful in helping us find out about the quality of education at St Augustine's. Our overall judgements are that the education you receive is good and much of it is outstanding.

These are the things we found out during our visit.

- St Augustine's is well led and managed by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. Your personal development, achievement and well-being are at the heart of everything they do.
- Your teachers are knowledgeable and have high expectations of your work and behaviour. They encourage you to become creative and independent learners and support you when you need extra help. In turn, you show excellent attitudes to learning, your behaviour is exemplary and you make good and sometimes outstanding progress in lessons.
- You receive outstanding guidance and support. You told us that you enjoy school very much and feel safe and well cared for.
- The curriculum is well matched to your needs through a good range of academic, vocational and enhancement options.
- Staff know you as individuals and are always willing to put themselves out to provide extra help if you need it. This includes organising the outstanding range of activities that are available for you outside normal lessons.
- You develop excellent social skills through the many ways in which you contribute to the life of the school and the local community. You show respect and concern for each other and for those less fortunate which you demonstrate through your many fundraising activities for local, national and international charities.

You are rightly proud to be members of St Augustine's. Your teachers and the staff have worked hard to bring about improvements and they want to carry on doing this. We have recommended to them that they extend the effective improvement strategies to ensure that more of you make outstanding progress. You can help them by continuing to work hard and making the most of the opportunities the school provides.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer HMI

Lead inspector (on behalf of the team)