

All Saints RC Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122900
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	327819
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Matharu HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1076
Sixth form	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Rathe
Headteacher	Mr A Burns
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2005
School address	Broomhill Lane Mansfield Nottinghamshire NG19 6BW
Telephone number	01623474700
Fax number	01623471118

Age group	11–18
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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

All Saints' RC Comprehensive School is an average sized comprehensive school. At the time of the inspection, the school had an acting headteacher in place, overseen by an executive headteacher from another school. The school is situated to the north of Mansfield and in addition to taking students from the locality, takes some from a wider area due to parental choice. The large majority of students are of White British origin with a very small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Students enter the school with standards that are above the national average. The school has a much lower than average number of students eligible for free school meals and a lower than average number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school gained specialist college status for performing arts in September 2002.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. The disappointing GCSE results of 2007 prompted a major review of school systems and structures. Previous targets were recognised as insufficiently challenging. Subsequent changes have prompted significant improvements. The newly created senior leadership team appreciate the need to continue raising achievement and have responded accordingly. School self-evaluation is now systematic and accurate but, until last year, the process was insufficiently rigorous to root out weaknesses and was not an effective tool for raising achievement. Consequently, standards and achievement over recent years have not been as high as might reasonably be expected, given students' starting points. However, following a vigorous improvement strategy, all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are now making at least satisfactory progress in their work.

A good grasp is now evident of the school's strengths and weaknesses. In a short time, the new leadership team has confirmed the priority to improve teaching and learning in order to raise achievement and a vigorous improvement strategy, introduced last year, continues. There has already been significant impact; progress in Years 9 and 11 improved in 2008 and the school's current monitoring system indicates that progress at both Key Stages continues to improve. Despite this, results in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 remain below expectations.

The personal development of students is a strength of the school, with many good features evident, in particular the positive attitudes of students towards learning. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. A number of strengths are emerging, for example in the quality of planning, although marking of work and feedback to students remains variable. The matching of work to students' abilities is not as precise as it could be, in particular for the most able students. The curriculum has developed well since the last inspection. The good practice evident in the school's specialist subjects within performing arts is being harnessed to support improvements in teaching and learning across the curriculum, and strengthen aspects of creativity within all subjects. However, curriculum provision for citizenship remains under developed. Pastoral care is a strong feature but academic support and feedback through marking are insufficiently established to ensure that progress at Key Stage 4 is consistently good across all subjects. Similarly, the monitoring and evaluation of progress made in the sixth form is insufficiently robust.

Recent reorganisation and appointments have significantly strengthened the senior team. This team is experienced, cohesive, and ably led by the Acting Headteacher under the guidance of the Executive Headteacher. The partnership forged with another Nottinghamshire school is proving to be productive in supporting the school's ongoing development. Well-structured planning involves managers at all levels in supporting the school's improvement drive. There is a shared sense of purpose and widespread recognition at all levels that the current focus on raising achievement is essential in order for students to continue achieving higher standards.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form in relation to their levels of attainment on entry at the start of Year 12. Provisional examination results for 2008 show students gained broadly average standards in both Years 12 and 13. Current students in both Years 12 and 13

are working to more challenging targets, with a satisfactory proportion on-track to exceed them. Leadership of the sixth form is sound overall, but shows good capacity for further improvement. Senior leaders are implementing, promoting and developing well a number of important initiatives in order to raise the effectiveness of the sixth form beyond a satisfactory level. New methods for tracking students' progress, and setting their targets, are being introduced. Currently, such systems and their practical use vary too much between subjects. This has not enabled senior and middle leaders to analyse and evaluate the data existing on student performance effectively enough. Staff training to ensure new mentoring procedures to support students and intervene to prevent underachievement is under-way. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall because the use of assessment to aid lesson planning is still developing. However, there is good use of a variety of teaching styles and students speak appreciatively about the passion many of their teachers have for their subjects. More effective use is starting to be made of partnership links with other local schools to develop the sixth form curriculum and extend options for students. Opportunities are provided for higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 to start A level courses, or take examinations early. Personal and careers guidance for sixth form students is good and is appreciated by students, whether they go on to higher education or the world of work. Students' personal development is good. They develop into thoughtful young adults who are willing to accept increasing responsibility within the community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4.
- Increase the level of challenge for more able students
- Improve the quality and consistency of marking and feedback for students.
- Establish a system of tracking, monitoring and evaluating sixth form progress in line with the whole school system.

A small proportion of the schools where overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students generally enter the school in Year 7 with above average standards in the Year 6 national tests. Nevertheless, since the last inspection and up to a low point in 2007, these standards were not maintained. By summer 2007, standards by Year 11 were below average and students' achievement was unsatisfactory. This provided a wake-up call for the school and over the last year, much has been done to remedy this underachievement. Consequently, provisional results for the summer 2008 tests for Year 9 students show standards are once again above average, with students now making satisfactory progress between Years 7 and 9. New and more effective tracking systems have been introduced which enabled students in Year 11 to recover and improve the overall 2008 GCSE results for 5 or more A* to C grades to the provisional national average. However, there was still an element of underachievement by Year 11 because the proportion of students gaining a good grade in English and mathematics at GCSE was below average. Whilst the new systems for monitoring students' progress are still being embedded and tested, they are accurate enough to show the achievement of current Year 10 and 11 students is improving. Standards are rising gradually once again, because of more challenging targets being set for students and more consistent teaching in the core

subjects. There remain some inconsistencies between subjects, particularly where the school has experienced staffing problems. However, overall, all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are now making at least satisfactory progress in their work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students is good in the whole school. Spiritual and moral development is particularly good. Through religious education, communal worship and the religious ethos of the school, students develop a strong awareness of values, principles and beliefs. Students have a satisfactory understanding of their local community. The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) provision plays an increasing role in developing their understanding of the diversity of the United Kingdom and global communities.

Behaviour and relationships in the school are good and so students show respect for their teachers and each other during lessons and around the school. However, students receive insufficient guidance on the negative impact on the environment of dropping litter around the school. Attendance has improved and students are now highly motivated to come to school. They enjoy their education and particularly value the good range of extra-curricular activities. Students' attitudes to learning are generally positive and so the great majority of them rise to the challenge when their lessons are lively and engaging. The students feel that there is little bullying and that, if it occurs, the school deals effectively with it.

Students adopt safe practices, although the school is aware that some aspects of provision in practical areas are in need of review. Students know and understand the importance of healthy life styles, and their responses to PSHE issues and involvement in sport is effective in supporting this. Their contribution to responsible action in their school and wider community is good, and the school forum and charity fundraising are key elements in this. Economic well-being is promoted successfully through good links with local businesses, work experience, careers provision and visits to higher education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the main school and in the sixth form. In many subjects, features of good and at times outstanding practice are evident.

Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good, and relationships with their students are friendly and relaxed. Where teachers use questioning effectively, students build on their thinking skills and undertake tasks enthusiastically and confidently. At these times, they are reluctant to stop at the end of the lesson! Students themselves say they learn best when activities include regular opportunities for discussion and for working in pairs or small groups. However, in some lessons, teachers talk too much, allowing too few opportunities for students to explain their ideas and justify their opinions. There is not enough planning within lessons to cater for students' different abilities and learning styles. In particular, students who are more able are not always provided with sufficient challenge. Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective support to enable them to access all subjects fully.

The quality of marking is too variable. Feedback on points for further improvement is not always clear enough to ensure that students know what aspects of their work require improvement and how to set about this. In some subjects, marking is too infrequent and students have to wait too long before they know whether their efforts to improve are successful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Following review and re-organisation, the curriculum has been revised since the previous inspection. Information and communication technology is incorporated into teaching and learning in all subjects, although this is not always used to maximum effect. Students now have two hours of physical education each week, which meets recommended guidelines.

Year 7 students benefit from a recently introduced thinking skills course that encourages a positive, 'can-do' approach to learning. Most students study two modern foreign languages. A small group of students in Year 9, who struggle with the demands of the full curriculum, follow an appropriate personalised learning programme designed to improve their competence in literacy and numeracy. Students in Years 10 and 11 choose from four different 'pathways' which include both academic and vocational courses leading to Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and GCSE qualifications. The system of identifying and supporting vulnerable students is effective. Courses for students who struggle to complete an academic curriculum lead to the development of specific skills and recognised qualifications. There are courses in mathematics for students who are gifted and talented, and performing arts students have the opportunity to be entered early for GCSE and BTEC qualifications in order to start AS level courses in Year 11.

The school's special status as a performing arts college greatly enhances and enriches the experience and opportunities for all students both by the inclusion of dance and drama in the regular curriculum, and by the extensive programme of arts events and the contributions of visiting professionals within the formal curriculum and beyond. The PHSE programme is currently under review to improve the provision for citizenship, which is not yet fully satisfactory. Access to good quality careers advice and well-organised work experience ensure students are prepared for their future working lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory in the main school and the sixth form. Since the inception of a well-planned academic intervention programme, the school has been in a better position to provide targeted support to individual students. This is now having a measurable impact on improving standards and achievement. The school's chaplaincy plays an increasing role in promoting good personal development through counselling, supporting students' charity work and helping to ensure the impact of the student voice. Pastoral care for students' welfare is a strength of the school.

The school caters successfully for the needs of different groups of students and promotes equality. For example, the needs of Polish students have been carefully considered, as have the needs of those who are vulnerable or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The John Paul Centre on site makes an important contribution to the coordination of internal and external support for these students. Students are generally well informed about their current attainment levels, although there is too much variability in the quality of marking provided. Parents are

broadly supportive of the school but some of them comment, with justification, on the frequency of supply teachers and the lack of continuity this inevitably brings. There are generally satisfactory systems to safeguard students. These comply with statutory requirements, but the updating of staff training remains a priority for action. Students are well informed about courses available to them and are encouraged to aspire to higher education through good links with a number of universities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The newly established senior leadership team is providing clear direction for the school's work. There are good management structures in place with clear lines of responsibility and accountability that are effectively developing distributed leadership.

The current focus on raising standards is appropriate. Teaching and learning are now being monitored and evaluated rigorously and underperformance tackled robustly. Good use is made of outside expertise, for example through the formal partnership with Redhill School and effective use of other external agencies to support the school's improvement drive. These are having a positive effect. Despite the improved focus on raising achievement and tackling underperformance, the leadership team are aware that some inconsistencies remain in aspects of teaching and learning and are tackling these vigorously. Improvement planning is sharp and tightly focused.

Middle leaders are satisfactory overall. They are beginning to get to grips with their roles in driving forward the teaching and learning improvements required and are aware of the pressing need to raise achievement, but new systems are not yet embedded. A number of team leaders are sharply focused on appropriate improvement strategies and clear in their planning to achieve these, but some inconsistency remains. However, good support is provided to help team leaders to lead effectively and improvements are evident.

The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. Governors are aware of the improvements required, take decisive action and are directly involved in the school's self-evaluation. They are effective in carrying out their responsibilities and are fully committed to the ongoing improvement drive. Improvement since the last inspection was initially too slow but has accelerated recently. There is sufficient impact of recent improvements to indicate that the capacity to improve from this point is good.

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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	16-19
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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?	3	3
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

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

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	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	3	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
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**

10 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of All Saints RC Comprehensive School, Mansfield NG19 6BW

Thank you for your contributions to your school's recent inspection. The inspection team enjoyed meeting many of you and hearing your views. Overall, we found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. It is rapidly improving because results are improving, particularly in Year 11 where progress has not been as good as it should be in recent years, especially in English and mathematics. Your teachers are aware of this and are working hard to continue the improvements evident in the results of 2008.

You demonstrate impressive personal and social skills. The school's positive ethos and atmosphere clearly encourage you to develop a strong sense of responsibility. You behave well in lessons and around school and most of you are positive about school life. You told us that you enjoy learning most when you are actively involved and encouraged to discuss and work with others. You appreciate the strong relationships with teachers and the range of opportunities available to you, particularly within the arts provision, which is a real strength of the school.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, although much of it is good or better. The curriculum provided is sound and there are plans to develop this further, particularly the range of options available to you after age 14. You told us that you feel safe and well cared for in school with instances of bullying being rare. Although you are cared for well, we found that marking and feedback to you on how to improve is weak at times.

Your school is led well by the new senior team, where recent changes are bringing about a new direction with a sharper emphasis on the progress you are making. There are several things we have asked your school to do in order to improve further:

- we think that GCSE results in English and mathematics could be even better and we have asked the school to continue with a range of activities to improve these
- increase the level of challenge for those of you who find learning easy
- improve the marking and feedback you receive so that you are clear about how to improve your work
- make sure that the progress of sixth form students is carefully checked and monitored.

You can help by taking notice of feedback provided and applying this in future work. We feel sure your school will continue to improve and wish you every success in the future.

Best wishes

Judith Matharu

Her Majesty's Inspector