

Archbishop Ilsley Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103541
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336104
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Joyce HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1279
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M. Mills
Headteacher	Mr S. O'Donnell
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 October 2006
School address	Victoria Road Acocks Green Birmingham B27 7XY
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 24 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of school documentation, including whole-school policies, improvement plans, current pupil performance data and minutes from governing body meetings. They analysed 766 questionnaires returned by parents and pupil and staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively pupil progress information is used to plan learning and aid progress
- the contribution of the specialist technology status in improving the overall quality of education provided
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in monitoring, evaluating and improving provision
- the effectiveness of the sixth form in meeting students needs and raising standards.

Information about the school

Archbishop Ilsley Catholic School is a larger than average school serving the south eastern suburbs of Birmingham. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average and many students in the sixth form are in receipt of the education maintenance allowance. The pupil population is predominately White British with a significant proportion from an Irish cultural background. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. The school is designated as a specialist technology college and has gained the Healthy Schools award. A range of extended services, including adult and family learning are provided on the school premises.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school with many outstanding features. Staff and pupils are rightly proud of their school and have successfully created a very safe and extremely supportive environment. On an inspection questionnaire one pupil commented 'Our school is wonderful. I love this school.' This sentiment was shared by the vast majority of pupils and staff that returned questionnaires.

A real sense of community exists within the school creating a friendly and harmonious environment which promotes the strong Catholic ethos. Relationships are excellent with pupils and staff showing mutual respect for one another. Staff have high expectations and demonstrate a strong commitment to making the school even better. In the main school, good teaching together with outstanding care, guidance and support enable pupils to make good progress and achieve well. A good curriculum with an impressive range of extra-curricular activities ensures pupils develop as well rounded individuals. The sixth form is not as effective as the main school with considerable variation in the performance of different subjects. However, overall, the provision does satisfactorily meet students' needs and enables them to make adequate progress.

Teaching throughout the school is well planned and teachers use a variety of techniques to engage pupils. In most lessons pupils are attentive and contribute effectively to their learning. Attainment and progress information is used well to track pupil progress overall, although its use to aid individual progress is not as effective. Teachers work closely with support assistants to ensure pupils that require help receive it, however, not all teachers focus on ensuring the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged in all lessons.

The varied curriculum in the main school provides a good range of opportunities for most pupils. The specialist technology status has contributed significantly to improving the quality of education across the curriculum. The school has invested heavily in technology resources that are used well by staff and pupils to make learning more enjoyable and meaningful. The technology curriculum is broad and enables pupils throughout the school to develop an excellent range of skills that very effectively contribute to their future economic well-being. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and pupils contribute exceptionally well to both the school and wider community. In the sixth form the school recognise the need to further develop the curriculum provision.

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Pupils are known to school staff as individuals and levels of care, support and guidance are outstanding. Pupils report that they really enjoy school and feel extremely safe. Incidents of bullying are rare. Behaviour is good overall and behaviour management arrangements are generally effective. Pastoral care is outstanding and communication between year group tutors, heads of year and subject tutors is excellent. The school has developed extensive links with a range of external support agencies that work with school staff extremely effectively to promote the health and well-being of pupils.

Leadership and management are good overall with aspects that are outstanding. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for further development. Senior leaders use monitoring and evaluation information very effectively to target and drive improvement and have the full confidence of school staff. At subject level monitoring and evaluation is not yet as effective and some managers perform this aspect of their role more effectively than others. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Given the improvement since the last inspection together with accurate self-evaluation, good partnership working and excellent engagement with parents and carers the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop strategies to provide additional stretch and challenge for the most able pupils by making more effective use of performance information
- Share best practice in monitoring and evaluation at subject level to enable greater consistency in the rate of improvement
- Raise standards in the sixth form by using monitoring and evaluation information to target and address courses that are underperforming

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment levels in the main school are above average overall and pupils make good progress based on their starting points. Attainment levels continue to rise year on year and in 2009 the school achieved its best ever GCSE results. The proportion of pupils achieving five A* - C grades increased to 75% and the proportion achieving this level including English and mathematics also increased to above the national average level. There is no significant difference between the achievement rate of different groups of pupils including those with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities or those from vulnerable groups. Pupils clearly enjoy their learning and inspectors observed pupils of all ability levels, including pupils with identified learning difficulties, willingly participating in lessons making good progress and generally achieving well. In the sixth form student achievement is satisfactory.

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Pupils are well informed about the need to lead healthy lifestyles and this is well promoted through the specialist status during food technology lessons and through the outstanding programme of personal, social and health education. Pupils have a good understanding about the dangers associated with smoking and drug use. A high proportion chooses to eat healthily from the exceptional range of nutritiously balanced food available within school. The physical education curriculum together with an extensive range of extra-curricular activities enables students to take regular exercise.

The contribution to the school and local community is excellent with pupils raising significant funds for charity and engaging with local community organisations. An active school council influences the decision making processes within school and ensures the pupil voice is heard. Workplace skills are developed exceptionally well with students developing good literacy, numeracy and information technology skills. Pupils also gain in confidence and self-esteem developing communication, team working and financial awareness skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching ensures most pupils are engaged in learning. Teachers use assessment information to monitor pupil progress effectively although it is not used as well to devise activities that provide sufficient stretch and challenge for the most

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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able pupils. In some instances marking and assessment does not detail sufficiently what students need to do to improve. Most teachers use information learning technology well to promote learning and resources are good. Teachers know their pupils well and are very willing to give additional help and support to individuals outside of timetabled lessons.

Pupils benefit from a good and developing range of courses within the curriculum that include academic and vocational options. A well considered personal, social and health education programme that includes guest speakers, trips and visits significantly enhance pupils' learning and enjoyment and contributes very effectively to their personal development. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted through curriculum activities and especially in the religious education curriculum. However, insufficient time is allocated to the physical education curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

Pupils receive exceptional care, guidance and support and benefit from the excellent working partnerships formed with external agencies. Careers advice and guidance enables pupils to make informed decisions about their future and enable the vast majority of pupils to progress to further or higher education, employment or training. The excellent care and support provided by school staff is highly valued by pupils and is a key strength of the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders work extremely effectively as a team and together with governors embed ambition and drive improvement. Leaders communicate a shared vision for the school that is focused on continuous improvement. Staff show a strong commitment to the school community and morale is high. Monitoring and evaluation at senior level, especially pupil performance monitoring, is well developed and is used effectively to raise standards. At subject level the effectiveness of monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning is variable.

Governors are very supportive of the school and are frequent visitors. They have good links with subject areas and are very knowledgeable about the school. They provide an appropriate level of challenge and monitor most aspects of the schools work. Community cohesion is well promoted as a result of a clear analysis of the

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school and wider community context. Pupils from different backgrounds interact well with each other and engagement with community groups beyond the school continues to develop. The school effectively promotes equality of opportunity through staff training and the performance and experience of different groups are well monitored to ensure no individual is disadvantaged.

Safeguarding arrangements are highly effective with excellent links to a number of key agencies. Policies and procedures are clear and are frequently reviewed to take account of multi-media technologies. Risk assessments are comprehensive and reviewed frequently. Governors and staff at all levels have a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues and know their responsibilities. The school works extremely effectively with parents and carers who receive frequent communication, are regularly invited into school and are given many opportunities to contribute to school life.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

In this inclusive sixth form students make satisfactory progress and achieve as expected based on their starting points. Success rates are broadly average although vary considerably between different subjects. Whilst many subjects do have a 100% pass rate the proportion of students achieving high grade passes is below average. Students do contribute to the school and local community very well and are fully involved in school life.

Teaching in the sixth form enables students to learn and make progress. In some subjects teaching is more effective than in others. In the best lessons students are

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involved in meaningful discussion and debate which enables them to gain a deeper understanding of the topic being covered. However, in too many lessons, the more able are not sufficiently challenged. Guidance and support for students is generally effective and students value the support provided by their tutors. Careers education and guidance is strong with many students progressing into higher education.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and continue to make steady improvements to provision. However, monitoring and evaluation information is not used effectively to address and target underperformance in a number of courses.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents are very supportive of the school and all it does for their children. One parent commented 'I am delighted with the overall experience my child has at school'. Another commented 'My child is happy in this school which provides a good all round education'. The sentiment in these comments was echoed by the significant majority of parents and inspection evidence supported these views. A small number of parents expressed disappointment with the way in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and with the way in which the school takes account of suggestions and concerns. While inspectors noted some inconsistency with the way some staff deal with pupils exhibiting unacceptable behaviour, overall inspection evidence did not support these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Archbishop Ilesley Catholic Schools to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 766 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1279 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	302	39	424	55	28	4	12	2
The school keeps my child safe	350	46	403	53	10	1	3	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	334	44	388	50	36	5	6	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	329	43	401	52	25	3	5	1
The teaching is good at this school	329	43	409	53	21	3	2	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	256	33	444	58	52	7	6	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	239	31	475	62	39	5	9	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	289	38	433	57	29	4	4	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	294	38	431	56	32	4	8	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	300	39	398	52	45	6	20	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	193	25	505	66	44	6	15	2
The school is led and managed effectively	332	43	414	54	14	2	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	386	50	348	45	28	4	4	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



25 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Archbishop IIsley Catholic School, Birmingham, B27 7XY

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the outcome of the inspection. Before I do, I would like to thank you all for your help during our visit. We found what you had to say very helpful in making our judgements about the school.

We were pleased to hear so many of you enjoy going to school. Many of you told us how friendly and helpful school staff are, and how safe you feel in school. It was clear to us that most of you are proud of your school and are very pleased with the way in which the school enables you to develop a wide range of skills and knowledge.

We found your school to be a very good school that has many outstanding features. Good teaching and outstanding care, guidance and support enable you to make good progress and achieve well between Years 7 and 11. The school curriculum is varied and enables you to develop well as young people. It provides you with many opportunities to develop a wide range of skills and to contribute well to the school and local community in an extremely safe and supportive environment. We judged the school sixth form to be satisfactory overall.

During our inspection, we identified some aspects where the school could improve further. As a result, we have asked the school to:

- Use performance information more effectively to ensure the work set by teachers sufficiently challenges all of you in all lessons.
- Share best practice in monitoring and evaluation between subject leaders so you see the same level of improvement in all areas.
- Use monitoring and evaluation information to target and address the courses in the sixth form that do not perform as well as they should.

The headteacher and other school staff are already working hard to improve these areas and they have a good understanding of what needs to be done. They are very committed to making the school even better. You can help them by continuing to concentrate and work hard in all of your lessons. We wish you well for the future.

Paul Joyce
Her Majesty's Inspector

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