

St Francis Xavier's College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104718
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	336355
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1295
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr H King
Headteacher	Mr Leslie Rippon
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2007
School address	High Lee Beaconsfield Road Liverpool L25 6EG
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 36 lessons. About three quarters of inspectors' time was spent observing students' learning. The inspectors saw 36 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's monitoring, self-evaluation, students' progress tracking and improvement planning. Inspectors also took account of the 200 questionnaire returns from parents and carers.

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

- the attainment and achievement of students, with a special emphasis on English and mathematics
- the quality and impact of teaching, especially in the key areas of English and mathematics
- the impact of leadership and management on levels of attainment and students' learning and progress.

Information about the school

This is a much larger-than-average boys' school in which a broadly average proportion of students are entitled to free school meals. Nearly all students are White British. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school has held specialist status in mathematics and computing since September 2005. The school has a number of external awards including Healthy Schools Award, Sports Mark, Dyslexia Friendly status, Basic Skills Quality Mark and International Schools Award – intermediate level.

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. Good leadership is strongly committed to improving outcomes for students. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the school is accurate. It enables leaders and managers to identify a clear set of priorities and effective strategies to improve the overall effectiveness of the school. Consequently, the performance of the school is improving significantly in many key aspects, such as attainment and progress in English and mathematics in the main school and in students' attainment in the sixth form. The school is managing its specialist status in mathematics and computing effectively to improve resources, support rising levels of attainment and improve the quality of teaching. Factors such as these demonstrate the school's good capacity to sustain improvement.

Outstanding levels of care, support and guidance impact positively on students' good levels of enjoyment of school and on how safe they feel in school. The school's outstanding promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination is enabling all students to make good and rapidly increasing progress. Students' behaviour is good. They are welcoming to visitors. They are polite, respectful and articulate. Their commitment to the school and wider community is outstanding. They are eager to take on responsibilities and are genuinely concerned for the plight of others less fortunate than themselves. The levels of their work to support relief workers in Haiti and their fund-raising activities are exemplary, for example. Students' very good levels of attendance, their maturity and their high levels of basic skills mean that they are outstandingly well prepared for their future economic well-being. The proportion of students who leave school and do not continue in education, training or employment is commendably low. Students' appreciation of the importance of healthy lifestyles is outstanding. They show high levels of understanding and knowledge of factors affecting health. Numbers participating in the school's wide range of sporting activities are impressively high.

A large majority of teaching is good or better. It enables students to make good progress and achieve well overall. However, a significant minority of teaching is only satisfactory. In satisfactory lessons teachers do not make effective use of the school's good resources in information and communication technology (ICT) to add extra interest and vitality to students' learning, with the result that progress in these lessons is slower. Teaching judged satisfactory does not include routinely planned tasks which are appropriate or challenging to the needs of learners of differing abilities, so that occasionally students find the work too easy or too difficult. The school has worked hard to improve its systems for tracking students' progress towards demanding targets; they are now good. However, the impact of assessment is only satisfactory because the

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quality of marking is too inconsistent in giving students clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work in the short term. This also applies to marking in the sixth form

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of satisfactory teaching so that it is at least good by:
 - making sure that information and communication technology is used consistently well to support learning
 - making sure that activities are planned to match more closely students' differing needs and abilities.
- Improve the quality of marking in the main school and the sixth form so that students know more precisely what they need to do to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students enjoy learning. They are keen to do their best. They work effectively when they are given opportunities to work collaboratively in pairs and groups. In the majority of lessons they show high levels of commitment and interest. Behaviour only rarely falls below good because relationships between learners and adults are strong. Good teaching is at the root of students' good progress and achievement. Highly effective tracking of progress for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, together with effective deployment of teaching assistants, ensures that students make good progress. From broadly average starting points students make good progress to achieve above average levels of attainment. New leadership in the key areas of English and mathematics has challenged previously satisfactory achievement successfully. Results from early entries in GCSE examinations in both subjects show that attainment in the present Year 11 cohort has risen steeply to levels significantly above the 2009 national averages. The school is able to present compelling evidence of similar improvement in the present Year 10. Inspection evidence of students' work and progress confirms this.

Students are proud of their school. They say that much teaching has become more interesting and that their enjoyment is growing as a result. They also say that, as enjoyment has grown, so too has punctuality to school and lessons. They comment on a renewed 'sense of purpose' to learning. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They show good levels of respect for each other and the adults working with them. The more able students enjoy helping others who find learning more difficult, in paired and group work. However, opportunities for sixth-form students to support younger students are not routinely exploited. Students show good knowledge of and respect for other religions and cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2

How effective is the provision?

The core of good and better teaching enables students of all abilities to make good progress across the school. Good and better teaching is characterised by good pace and effective planning which makes sure students have a diet of stimulating activities appropriate to their needs and abilities. Constructive and supportive relationships are evident in the vast majority of lessons. Students respond with consistently good and respectful behaviour. In the best lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm inspire students to learn and achieve highly. In a minority of lessons, where teaching is less effective, the pace of teaching is too often pedestrian and activities are not always sufficiently stimulating to motivate students to secure better than satisfactory levels of progress and attainment.

Significant changes have been made to the curriculum to give students more choice of courses and qualifications, including vocational pathways and early entry to GCSE in a range of subjects. These changes are popular with students and are proving effective in raising achievement and meeting students' diverse needs and interests. Specialist status in mathematics and computing has also been instrumental in extending the range of options for students. It has also supported students' acquisition of good levels of basic skills, especially in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Students enjoy a good range of extra-curricular activities in sports, the arts and travel abroad. Participation rates are high. The activities make a significant contribution to

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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students' enjoyment and adoption of healthy lifestyles.

There are excellent arrangements for the care of students. Pastoral support is very strong. The school chaplaincy provides very effective support for vulnerable students and their families. The introduction of an inclusion unit that is exceptionally well managed provides excellent support for students whose behaviour causes concern. Numbers of exclusions have dropped significantly as a result. Highly effective links have been forged with feeder primary schools so that transition to secondary school is smooth. Older students praise the guidance they receive for future career and study pathways.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 leadership provide a clear vision focused on ensuring that weaknesses are tackled rigorously and sensitively. Staff share their ambition and have embraced the changes that are bringing about improvement. Governors have a range of skills and provide a good level of support and challenge in securing improvement. Middle leaders are developing their skills and are fully committed to securing improvements although there are still some inconsistencies in the quality of monitoring and evaluation, especially the monitoring of marking.

The promotion of equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work. It is evident in the exceptional levels of care and support provided. Inequalities in achievement have been rigorously tackled. For example, the satisfactory attainment of students of average ability has been tackled effectively so that they are now making good and improving progress in line with other groups of students.

Safeguarding procedures are good. Appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and visitors to the school. Relevant personnel receive regular training to update them on safeguarding and child protection procedures. Thorough risk assessments are carried out on students' activities and the school takes care to identify and support students who may be at risk.

The promotion of community cohesion is good. The school has a clear understanding of its context and plans accordingly. The school is a happy cohesive community. Students are active in the local community. Local community groups are welcomed into the school to use its facilities in a wide range of activities. Students' understanding of other religions and cultures is promoted effectively. The school accepts the need to evaluate

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the impact of its activities more formally.

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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Students enjoy the sixth form. Retention rates from Year 12 into Year 13 are high. Effective steps have been taken to improve sixth-form provision since the last inspection, following a thorough and honest review of strengths and weaknesses. For example, the range of subjects has been extended through effective collaboration with a neighbouring school. Students have a much wider range of options appropriate to their needs and aspirations. The rigorous monitoring of teaching has brought about improvement to its quality and impact on learning. Teaching is good. Students praise the teaching they receive. A minority of teaching, however, does not present students with sufficient opportunities for independent learning. Attainment and progress are rising as a result of better teaching and a wider range of appropriate courses. Students make good progress and achieve well. Tracking of students' progress is regular and rigorous. Students know their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. However, the inconsistencies in the quality of marking are as apparent in the sixth form as in the main school. Students are pleased with the effective care, guidance and support they receive. They appreciate especially the guidance they receive for pathways when they leave the sixth form. A high proportion of students go on to higher education.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers say that they are happy overall with their child's experience at the school. Positive comments include: 'I am pleased with the care the school provides for my children' and 'My children enjoy school very much. Teachers are very helpful and approachable.' A few parents and carers expressed some concern at the progress their child is making. While this may have been the case previously, inspection evidence shows that almost all students are now making good progress. A small minority felt the school did not help them support their child's learning. Inspectors were satisfied, however, that the school is improving this aspect by, for example, developing its use of ICT and assessment procedures to better involve parents and carers in their child's work and progress. A small minority also felt that the school fails to deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Discussions with students and evidence gathered during the inspection led inspectors to the judgement that procedures for dealing with poor behaviour have been strengthened and that behaviour both in lessons and around the school are now good. A small minority of parents and carers also thought that the school did not take sufficient account of their opinions or concerns. Inspectors looked into this and were satisfied that the school's procedures overall were effective in seeking the views of parents and carers and in responding to their concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Francis Xavier's College 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 200 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1295 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	39	110	55	8	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	95	48	93	47	5	3	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	98	49	83	42	13	7	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	83	42	94	47	16	8	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	87	44	95	48	15	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	72	36	101	51	19	10	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	68	34	107	54	19	10	2	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)	78	39	91	46	10	5	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	80	40	99	50	12	6	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	76	38	96	48	13	7	7	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	23	117	59	18	9	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	87	44	93	47	10	5	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	97	49	92	46	7	4	1	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 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

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

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 pupil's 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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of St Francis Xavier's College, Liverpool, L25 6EG

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school during the recent inspection. You will be pleased to know that you go to a good school. We were impressed with your good behaviour and with your excellent contribution to the school and the wider community. It was very pleasing to see so many of you taking your health so seriously, by taking advantage of the wide range of sporting activities, for example. By the time you leave the school we think you are outstandingly well prepared for the future. We were also pleased to see your very good levels of attendance and to see that your punctuality to school has improved significantly – keep this up. This is a reflection of the excellent care, guidance and support provided by the school.

All of you are now making good progress because the school is working very hard to improve the quality of teaching you receive. It was heartening to see how much your GCSE results in English and mathematics are improving.

In order to make your school even more successful we are asking it to do a few things. We want your school to make sure that all your lessons are at least good by:

- making sure that all your teachers use information and communication technology consistently well to support and motivate you in your learning
- making sure that in all lessons the activities you are set match closely your levels of ability.

We are also asking the school to make sure that marking in the main school and the sixth form is consistent in telling you what you need to do to improve.

We are confident that you will continue to help your teachers maintain the improvements that are taking place to help your school go from strength to strength in future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Stephen Wall

Lead inspector

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