

St Paul's Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105579
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	336525
Inspection dates	24–25 March 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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	780
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tommy Judge
Headteacher	Mr W Daron
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons and saw 24 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the tracking of students' progress and the school's monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement. The inspectors analysed 205 questionnaire returns from parents and carers.

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

- students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, especially the proportion gaining at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics
- the impact of behaviour and attendance on students' learning and progress
- the quality and impact of teaching and the curriculum on students' achievement.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school in an urban area with a challenging social and economic profile. Nearly half of the students are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is broadly average; they come from a wide range of backgrounds. An influx of students from European countries such as Poland and Portugal in recent years has pushed up the number of students who speak English as an additional language to above average. Many of these students join the school speaking very little or no English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is well above average. The number of students who join or leave during the school year is well above average. Just over a year ago the school moved into a new building which it shares with a special school. The school gained specialist engineering status in January 2009. It has recently gained Healthy Schools Status.

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. The number of students is growing year on year reflecting the school's growing popularity in the community it serves. The school has improved significantly since the last inspection because accurate self-evaluation is used by the strong team of leaders and managers to set a clear agenda for improvement backed by rigorous action. Much of the focus has been on developing the quality of teaching and the curriculum; both are now good enabling students to learn effectively and make good progress. Attainment is rising rapidly as a result. Achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, is good. The significant improvements brought about in all key aspects of the school's work demonstrate the school's good capacity for sustained improvement.

Good care, guidance and support ensure that students feel safe in school. The school has a significant number of students who have unavoidable, lengthy absences because of, for example, responsibilities to their families as carers or because of emotional and/or physical health problems. Consequently, although most students attend school regularly, overall attendance is just below the national average. The school provides very good support for students who are on unavoidable long-term absence by tutoring them at home or after school. Strong links with outside agencies also ensure that vulnerable students receive appropriate specialist support. As a result, almost all students gain five or more GCSE passes in Year 11.

Good teaching enables students to make good progress and achieve well. Relationships between teachers and students are strong. They result in good behaviour. Teaching keeps a tight rein on classroom activities and students' learning. It does not consistently exploit the potential of information and communication technology (ICT) and other new technologies to develop students' learning. These factors combine to restrict opportunities for students to develop their skills as independent learners. By the time they leave school, therefore, students' preparation for future study or successful careers is only satisfactory. The good curriculum provides well for students' needs and aspirations. The school has used its engineering specialism effectively to extend the range of courses and qualifications in Key Stage 4 and to raise attainment. The school accepts that provision across different subjects to develop students' generally weak speaking skills is not yet sufficiently effective to bring about necessary improvement and raise achievement further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise achievement further by:
 - developing a coherent strategy across the school to develop students' speaking skills
 - providing students with more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and to develop as independent learners
 - make better use of ICT and other new technologies to support learning.

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

Students have positive attitudes to learning. In lessons they are attentive and keen to do their best. They work well in pairs and most are eager to contribute. However, many find it difficult to articulate answers clearly or at length because of their limited speaking skills. They take pride in presenting their written work. Attainment has risen over the last three years and inspection evidence shows that the trend is set to continue.

Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is average in the proportion of students attaining the benchmark of five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, but below average and rising swiftly if English and mathematics are included. This represents good achievement considering students' overall well below average starting points. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language also make good progress and achieve well because of the effective support they receive.

Students are welcoming to visitors. They treat each other and adults with respect. They know about the importance of healthy lifestyles. Participation rates in sporting enrichment activities are high. The active school council has lobbied successfully for free fruit to be available at morning break. Students enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as by becoming school councillors. They are active fundraisers in supporting the work of local and international charities. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They demonstrate a good grasp of right and wrong. They are aware of the needs of others and of those less fortunate than themselves. For example, groups of Year 11 students regularly visit Thailand to work in a Catholic orphanage, having raised their own finances to pay for the trip.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school has worked hard and successfully to improve the quality of teaching through rigorous monitoring, focused professional development and sharing good practice. Most teaching is now good with a very small minority that is satisfactory. Lessons are planned in detail and contain a good variety of activities to keep students motivated and on task. Teaching is nearly always conducted at a good pace. Occasionally, teachers talk too much and this acts as a brake on learning and progress. Teaching makes good use of very thorough assessment data to track the progress of individual students and groups. Good teaching is supported by a good curriculum to make learning enjoyable and meaningful. Leaders and managers constantly monitor the needs of different groups of students. They use the outcomes to tailor the curriculum to meet individual needs. The school is especially successful in providing for the large number of students who speak English as an additional language and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The wide range of extra-curricular activities in, for example, sports, drama, music productions and educational trips add to students' health and enjoyment as well as broadening their horizons.

Care, guidance and support are at the heart of the school's work. There are many vulnerable students whose needs and development are a priority for the school. Students who join the school in Year 7 or at later stages settle in quickly because they are made to feel welcome and valued. Key Stage 4 students praise the support and guidance they receive for future studies and careers. The proportion of students who leave the school without entering education, training or employment is commendably low.

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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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and managers are highly dedicated. The headteacher, ably supported by other senior leaders and an effective governing body, sets a clear strategic direction for the school. This promotes good levels of teamwork in pursuit of improving outcomes for students. Leaders and managers at all levels are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Wanting the best for students and holding staff to account accordingly are the cornerstones of the good leadership and management that drives the school forward.

In this inclusive school equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are central to its work. As a result, achievement for vulnerable students, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language, has improved and is now good. The school is a harmonious community in which students from different nationalities and racial backgrounds work together and socialise without problem.

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. 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. The school promotes students' understanding of other religions and cultures effectively. The school accepts the need to evaluate 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

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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	2
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

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers have positive views of the education that the school provides for their children. However, a small minority of parents and carers indicated some concern about the school's effective handling of unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors looked closely at behaviour as a result. Their observations in lessons showed behaviour to be good. In discussions with students a picture of rapidly improving behaviour emerged and this was supported by a sharp downward trend in exclusion rates for pupils. Observations around school showed some instances of boisterous behaviour but, generally, students behaved respectfully and sensibly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at St Paul's Catholic High School 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 205 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 780 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	38	110	54	13	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	94	46	103	50	7	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	87	42	102	50	10	5	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	76	37	111	54	14	7	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	72	35	119	58	10	5	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	64	31	118	58	18	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	31	115	56	20	10	0	0
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)	61	30	125	61	11	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	30	125	61	13	6	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	33	104	51	23	11	5	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	51	25	125	61	17	8	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	78	38	110	54	9	4	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	90	44	97	47	12	6	1	0

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 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of St Paul's Catholic High School, Manchester, M23 2YS

Thank you for your warm welcome during the recent inspection. You were keen to tell us how much you think your school has improved and inspectors agree with you. Your school is a good school.

It was pleasing to see how respectful you are to each other and the adults working with you. The school provides you with good levels of care, support and guidance so that all of you, regardless of background or ability, make good progress and feel safe. The school works very hard to make sure that those of you who have significant problems to overcome are helped in every way possible to succeed. It is good to see that almost all of you are now achieving well and that results in examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 are improving strongly. This is the result of good teaching, a good range of courses and qualifications in Key Stage 4 and strong leadership and management that has your success firmly at heart.

To help you achieve even better, I am asking the school to do three things.

- Make sure that you get more opportunities to develop as independent learners.
- Make more effective use of ICT and other new technologies to help you in your learning.
- Make sure that teaching across all subjects helps you to develop your speaking skills.

I am confident that you will continue to work hard with your teachers to make sure that your school stays as a good, effective school and goes from strength to strength in future.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Stephen Wall

Lead inspector

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