

Cathedral School, Wakefield's school of the Arts

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108296
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	337052
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Lowery HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	997
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Parton
Headteacher	Mr Paul West
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2007
School address	Thornes Road Wakefield West Yorkshire WF2 8QF
Telephone number	01924 303740
Fax number	01924 382674
Email address	learning@tcseuro.co.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 37 lessons of between 20 and 30 minutes in length and joined a number of arts workshops, altogether observing 41 staff. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised records and planning including safeguarding procedures, training records and surveys from the student voice programme. The 293 responses from parental questionnaires were considered together with the questionnaires completed by staff and students.

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

- the impact of teaching on raising attainment in the core subjects
- to what extent the teaching and the curriculum are meeting the needs of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- what contribution the specialism of performing arts is making to raising achievement across the school
- the effectiveness of middle leadership.

Information about the school

The Cathedral School Wakefield's School of the Arts, previously known as the Cathedral CE High School, is an average-sized specialist performing arts college which serves the north and west of Wakefield. Students are predominately White British. A small minority are from minority ethnic backgrounds; a larger than average proportion of students speak English as an additional language. A much larger than average proportion of students are entitled to free school meals. Four out of ten students are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is lower than that found nationally. The provision on-site for specialist post-16 courses as part of the Cathedral Academy of Performing Arts did not form part of this inspection.

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

The Cathedral School is an increasingly effective school providing its students with a good standard of education. There are several outstanding features, including the personalised care and support and the exceptional range of opportunities offered by the specialist performing arts courses. Partnership work is outstanding. There is a rich diversity of local and national artistic links and the school works closely with a broad range of support services to promote students' well-being.

The school is well led. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's future and he is supported by a strong leadership team. They have an accurate appreciation of the school's strengths and clearly identify the areas for further development. Middle leadership has been strengthened since the last inspection and this is now consistently driving forward the improvements in teaching and learning. Consequently, this is raising attainment. While students join the school with low levels of attainment and weak literacy skills, they are making good progress at both stages. A flexible curriculum in the first two years focuses effectively on strengthening students' core skills. This is followed by early entry onto more personalised programmes from Year 9. Students welcome the choices offered by the rich mix of vocational and academic courses and as a result, the vast majority of students are well motivated, enjoy their studies and are determined to achieve well.

A carefully targeted programme of training has supported an improvement in teaching and assessment. Much of the teaching is now good and in the arts it is frequently outstanding. Here, staff enthuse students, challenging them to work and perform at the highest levels. Where teaching is less effective, there are limited opportunities for students to develop good independent learning skills. A small group of students are less engaged in their learning, have poor patterns of attendance and can, on occasions, exhibit challenging behaviour. The school has adopted extremely effective systems to manage behaviour. Student liaison officers make a critical difference to the smooth running of the school; students praise its safe and calm environment. Overall levels of attendance, while improving, remain low and inhibit students' future economic well-being. Systems to provide care and guidance are carefully tailored to meet individual needs. Systems to support transition are strongly underpinned through good links with local primary schools. Good engagement with parents is reflected in the high attendance at the regular review meetings. Staff demonstrate an outstanding commitment to ensuring the welfare of all young people.

The improvements made to all aspects of the school have supported the rise in attainment. Early entry to GCSE examinations in 2010 means nearly half of students are gaining higher level GCSE passes in English and mathematics. Coupled with success on

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vocational courses, attainment has improved and is now broadly average. Challenging targets coupled with the accurate tracking of student progress supports the school's evaluation that achievement is good and will continue to strengthen.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by engaging all students in their learning by:
 - ensuring that lessons give students greater opportunity to work independently
 - improving students' attendance and reducing the proportion who are persistently absent
 - maintaining a rigorous focus on ensuring all students adopt high standards of behaviour.

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

Examination results in 2009 confirm that performance on GCSE and BTEC courses has steadily improved since the last inspection. More recent results from early entry to examinations, in particular in GCSE English and mathematics, show that attainment is now improving rapidly and is broadly in line with the national average. The vocational courses, which are popular with students, support good learning and attainment here is strong. Although students join the school with Key Stage 2 national test results and literacy skills which are below to well below national average, they are making good progress with their studies. This is a result of good teaching and carefully planned individual support. The school identifies that a few students, who are less engaged with their studies and have poor patterns of attendance, make slower progress than their peers. Despite this, the school is ensuring that all students leave school with external accreditation. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make slightly more progress than other students as a consequence of the specialist support they receive.

The vast majority of students behave well in lessons and around school. Rates of exclusion have fallen. Positive relations with staff assist students to learn well. Students are encouraged to take on leadership roles, through working with younger students, organising high quality artistic performances and contributing to future school planning. Consequently, their commitment to the school and local community is good. Through the arts specialism students have developed a strong cultural awareness and celebrate diversity. Well established connections with the church provide effective support in securing students' understanding of religious beliefs and values. Vulnerable students and those for whom English is an additional language are particularly well supported. Students identify that this is a school where 'everyone matters'. As a result, those from Years 7 to 11 confidently reported they felt safe and that adults would respond quickly to any concern they may have.

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	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	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	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 rightly identifies that the large majority of teaching is good or better. Lessons are carefully planned, well resourced, and effectively managed through consistent use of the behaviour management systems. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is effectively used to meet students' interests and needs. On occasions, where lessons are heavily dominated by the teacher, students become passive and are not given sufficient opportunities to think for themselves. A few students and parents expressed the view they would like more homework. Students' progress is carefully monitored and regular feedback is given ensuring most understand what they need to do to meet their personal targets. Marking has improved since the last inspection.

The strong curriculum is having a significant impact on motivating students. In Years 7 and 8 there is an emphasis on addressing weaknesses in students' core skills. Careful thought is given to meeting the individual requirements of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities through providing a personalised 'diamond' curriculum. Early access to options and vocational courses in Year 9 enables the curriculum to be carefully matched to individual needs and aptitudes. An imaginative range of arts courses and extra-curricular activities are enhanced through outstanding partnerships with local and national artistic groups. Students appreciate the broad range of opportunities provided to participate in artistic and sporting activities.

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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Systems to ensure the care, guidance and support of students are a particular strength and are embedded throughout the school. There is an emphasis on meeting the individual needs of all students. Close cooperation with the partner primary schools underpins the effective work with families prior to pupils transferring on to secondary school. The student support centre, in partnership with a broad range of external agencies, provides outstanding specialist support to a significant proportion of students. This is having a positive impact on behaviour and enabling students to become confident learners. Rates of attendance, while low, are gradually improving. The school maintains a rigorous focus on supporting students to attend lessons on a regular basis. Sixth formers from the Cathedral Academy for Performing Arts assist in providing effective support for younger students and act as a good role model for those in Years 10 and 11. Good support and guidance are provided for senior students; the proportion not moving on to education, employment or training is declining and below the national average.

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 rapid improvements made by the school are a result of a clear vision and outstanding drive from the headteacher. There is a widespread culture of high expectations and a commitment to achievement. As a result, there has been good progress made in engendering high aspirations among most students. Extensive planning and thorough evaluation have allowed the school to target its resources on raising standards. There is clear recognition that the school needs to continue to focus its attention on engaging its most challenging students in their learning. The governing body provides good support and strong challenge to senior leaders. They are committed to local partnership work and set ambitious targets to further raise attainment. The school is successful in tackling discrimination, with a real drive for inclusion. Extensive monitoring takes place to ensure all equally achieve positive outcomes. All statutory policies are in place and consistently applied. The school's commitment to community cohesion is good. In particular, this is reflected in the impressive engagement with the local community and wider cultural links developed through the specialist status. This is enabling students to engage with a diverse range of communities across Britain. Meticulous attention is given to ensuring students are safe. The school is well managed and secure. All staff and governors have received systematic training on safeguarding and child protection. Clarity in planning, ambitious targets, coupled with a track record

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of securing improvements indicate there is good capacity for further improvement.

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	1
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

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received completed questionnaires from approximately one third of parents and carers. Most expressed the view their child liked school and that they were happy with the education their children received. One parent wrote they were 'very pleased with their child's progress' and that 'the school had improved significantly over the past few years'. Almost all parents and carers expressed the view that the school kept their children safe; inspectors endorsed this view and graded safeguarding procedures as outstanding. A few felt the school did not respond to their suggestions or concerns. Inspectors found that the school's partnership working with parents and carers was good, but that it was seeking further ways to engage with all families, including through greater use of electronic and online communication.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cathedral School, Wakefield's school of the Arts 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 293 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 997 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	87	30	184	63	17	6	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	102	35	186	63	3	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	115	39	159	54	16	5	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	96	33	182	62	13	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	101	34	185	63	4	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	92	31	185	63	13	4	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	86	29	188	64	16	5	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)	98	33	180	61	8	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	94	32	185	63	9	3	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	106	36	170	58	13	4	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	88	30	173	59	24	8	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	98	33	178	61	9	3	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	107	37	171	58	9	3	3	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.



24 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Cathedral School, Wakefield's school of the Arts , Wakefield, WF2 8QF

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and taking the time to show us your work and talk to us during our recent inspection. We judged your school to be providing you with a good and rapidly improving education.

You told us through your questionnaires and in discussions how you feel safe in school and welcome the strong support and care you receive. Your relationships with staff are normally good. We noted how pleased you were with the flexibility offered in your curriculum choices from Year 9 and that you were proud of the high quality opportunities offered through the specialism in performing arts. You are making good progress in school and levels of attainment are rapidly rising. We found that your school is well led and that there is a real commitment to help you all to attain well.

Your headteacher agrees with us that a small group of students still need to be supported to get the best out of their education, enjoy their learning and attain well. We have suggested there needs to be a continued focus on ensuring everyone behaves well in lessons and attends on a regular basis. We have also asked your staff to ensure they give further opportunities for you to develop independent learning skills.

You have an important role in working with staff to continue to develop your school, in particular, through ensuring good attendance.

Best wishes to you for your future and good luck with your studies.

Yours sincerely

Paul Lowery

Her Majesty's Inspector

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