

St Chads Catholic and Church of England High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135731
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	360741
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Philip Jarrett HMI

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1028
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gerry Pitts
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Keeley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Grangeway Runcorn Cheshire WA7 5YH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors, and shadowed by a newly appointed Her Majesty's Inspector. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 33 lessons, taught by 33 different teachers. They held meetings with groups of students, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of other evidence including lesson plans, school policies, assessment data and case study files. They also looked at all the questionnaires completed by students and staff, and at the 132 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress of all groups of students to determine whether the teaching is sufficiently effective and consistent across the school.
- Whether effective steps are being taken to improve provision and outcomes in the sixth form.
- The impact of the specialist subjects across the school and beyond.
- The school's provision for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- The effectiveness of the school's plans to improve achievement in English.

Information about the school

St Chad's Catholic and Church of England High School is an average size secondary school. It opened as a joint church school in 2009, having previously been a Catholic secondary school. The leadership team and staff remained the same but a new governing body was constituted. Nearly two thirds of the students are currently baptised Catholics while the number of students from a Church of England background is increasing. Pupil numbers have risen and the school is now over-subscribed. Most students are of White British background. Around 5% of the students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and a small number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is average and the school identifies around one in five of its students as having some category of learning difficulty. The school has specialist language status. It provides training for all primary schools across the local authority on teaching modern foreign languages as well as leadership on supporting students with English as an additional language in other schools. The school has received a number of awards including the Inclusion Quality Mark, International School and Healthy School awards.

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

St Chad's Catholic and Church of England High School is a good school with many outstanding features. It has a very clear vision to serve the neighbourhood, promote community cohesion and develop students' understanding of the diverse global community. It achieves these aims very well. One parent wrote that the school, 'provides the ideal environment for children to flourish, build confidence and be happy.' This sums the school up effectively. Staff work well together to provide a very positive ethos for learning where all students, including those in vulnerable circumstances, feel welcome and build strong relationships with others.

Students feel extremely safe in the school. Behaviour is generally excellent and students say that there is very little evidence of bullying. The school is orderly and well managed. Students know who to turn to should problems arise and they value the support of all members of staff, including the resident police officer. The strong promotion of personal and social responsibility within the school encourages students to be polite and friendly to visitors. This is a school that values all students and is highly inclusive, promoting equality of opportunity for all exceptionally well.

Attainment is average at the end of Key Stage 4. All students make good progress by the end of Year 11. Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well in comparison with national figures because of the positive learning atmosphere in the school and good knowledge of their learning needs. Students are very keen to learn and concentrate well in lessons. Teaching is good overall although, in a minority of lessons observed, students' learning was only satisfactory. The most effective teaching engages students well through well-chosen, lively activities, a good level of challenge and opportunities for students to learn for themselves. Students are aware of their target grades in all subjects although marking and feedback is not yet sufficiently focused on how they can improve and reach those targets.

The headteacher and senior leaders are well respected by parents, carers and teachers. All staff work well together to a common agenda and purpose. The specialist language status of the school has been well used to improve teaching across departments, to support developments in the wider community, and to enhance students' understanding of the world beyond school. The curriculum meets students' needs well and the quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Self-evaluation is accurate; senior leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. As a result, the capacity for sustained improvement is good.

Leaders acknowledge that provision, and consequently students' achievement, in the sixth form is not yet as strong as across the rest of the school. The school has been successful in increasing recruitment into the sixth form and it provides a wide range of courses to

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meet students' needs. However, partnerships with other providers are not as strong at the post-16 level. Some teaching groups in the sixth form are very small and teachers are not equally successful at meeting students' needs and driving forward progress in these very small classes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching across the school by:
 - improving the consistency of marking and feedback to students
 - ensuring that all lessons challenge students and provide greater opportunities for independent learning.
- Raise achievement in the sixth form by:
 - building on existing good practice to identify effective teaching and learning strategies for improving the progress of students in small classes
 - reviewing the range of courses on offer, and the opportunities for partnerships with other providers, to ensure the school gets best value for money in its sixth form provision.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Attainment is broadly average at the end of Key Stage 4. GCSE results in English were below average in 2010 but the school has well-considered plans for improving results this year and evidence from lessons confirmed that students are currently making better progress. The gap between girls' and boys' attainment is less than the national average. Students enjoy lessons and want to do well. Progress is good. They listen carefully to others and work very well in groups when asked to collaborate. When given opportunities, they make good use of information and communication technology to find things out and they are keen to learn new ideas. They can make links between current and prior learning. Students are not all strongly self-motivating and, where lessons are teacher-dominated, they can become passive. Students are most engaged when the teaching is challenging and they are able to participate fully.

Students' conduct around the school is sensible and considerate. They manage their behaviour well. They have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating; students responded enthusiastically to interactive food demonstrations in a 'Ready, Steady, Cook' activity during the inspection. Above average numbers of students take part in out-of-school activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. Students' contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding. There is an active school council, many older students are responsible for running activities for younger students, student mentors work to support Year 6 and Year 7 students, and students are very involved with charitable activities and community groups. They develop management and enterprise skills through a range of well-planned activities. As one parent wrote, '(the school) gives students lots of opportunities for learning outside the classroom and to develop skills such as leadership and team work.' Spiritual development is a strength of the school and contemplation and reflection are a part of everyday life. The school's language specialism and links with other schools abroad help students to develop an excellent understanding

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of cultural diversity. Attendance is improving and there are effective measures to support and motivate persistent absentees.

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	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	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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

How effective is the provision?

.The most effective teaching motivates students through active approaches and challenging activities. Because students are very well behaved and keen to learn, they respond especially well to innovative and creative tasks. The best lessons observed were marked by enthusiastic delivery, supported by a diverse range of resources, and good use of the interactive whiteboard to engage students. Where students were given some responsibility for their learning, for example, to manage tasks or group work, or to conduct independent research, they made good progress. In less effective lessons, learning tended to be teacher-dominated, with the result that students were less challenged, leading to lack of involvement.

The curriculum is well planned to meet differing needs, providing specialist support for individuals and in areas including literacy and numeracy, where required. Good involvement with primary schools ensures effective progression when students enter Year 7. The curriculum has some distinctive and innovative features. There is very strong provision for modern foreign languages and this is enhanced by the use of staff from a partner school in China. Mandarin Chinese is offered as a second language. In addition to the strong emphasis on religious education, the school promotes the performing and

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creative arts well. There is a good range of pathways at Key Stage 4 providing choices in academic, vocational and basic skills courses. Partnerships with local schools enhance provision. Students' learning is extended by an outstanding range of additional and enrichment activities.

There are very significant strengths in the school's pastoral care programme. Very well-developed systems ensure that all students are known, valued and supported. Students know that their concerns will be listened to and they greatly appreciate the care and support that they receive. Support for vulnerable students is particularly strong. The school ensures that students who are in the early stages of learning English receive appropriate, effective support. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those looked after by the local authority are quickly identified and very well supported. Guidance for Year 9 students making option choices and for those moving into post-16 education is good and enables students to make well-informed decisions. The school operates a successful internal exclusion system that enables students to keep up with their studies when not in their mainstream classes.

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?

Effective leadership has maintained very high standards of care throughout the school and established a clear sense of direction for further improvement. Senior leaders and managers promote a very strong ethos which represents its Christian status and the desire to serve and support its community. The school is calm and runs smoothly. It is well led by the headteacher who knows all members of the school community well and has established an effective senior leadership team, with good delegated responsibilities. The governing body has a good understanding of key issues, and supports and challenges the school over its use of resources. Teaching has been enhanced through work in the specialist subjects and an innovative review of learning, involving students in observing lessons and reflecting on progress. Areas for improvement in teaching have been carefully identified although monitoring is not yet effective enough in ensuring consistently high standards in assessment and teaching. The school is highly inclusive. New arrivals, including a few students from war zones, are soon well-integrated and feel valued. There is no difference in the performance of different groups and outcomes are outstanding. The school is committed to the notion of community cohesion and its international links make a positive contribution in this area. Safeguarding is good because there are clear and well-evaluated policies and comprehensive and robust systems for caring for students.

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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	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	1

Sixth form

Students make satisfactory progress from below-average starting points on entry to the sixth form. Attainment is mostly below average in Advanced-level courses but in line with average in the other courses provided. The retention rate for students completing their courses has improved. Students are generally positive about the sixth form. They are often taught in small groups, especially at Advanced level. In the most effective lessons, teachers individualise the learning and encourage independent study and decision-making. In one particularly effective lesson, students took on the role of the teacher in leading the learning for other students. Some teachers tend to work predominately in more formal ways thus missing opportunities to challenge and extend individual learning in these very small groups. Students' progress is tracked well and reviewed regularly. Students contribute in a number of ways to the school community. For example, two sixth formers sit on the governing body. Students gain many of the skills required for economic well-being and show a good understanding of life in multicultural Britain. The school provides a wide range of courses, including over 20 at Advanced level, as well as some applied and vocational courses in order to meet the needs of students and the local community. However, this stretches resources, leading to very small teaching groups, and challenges teachers' specialist knowledge. There are no partnerships with other providers at present to support sixth form study. There is a good range of enrichment activities including film club, drama productions, sports and the Career Academy. Students are well prepared for the world beyond school. Senior leaders and managers share a clear vision for improvement of the sixth form and are well aware of current strengths and weaknesses.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
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 and carers are very happy with their children's experience at school. Nearly all of the parents and carers who completed the questionnaire were very positive about their children's experience at the school. In particular, they believe that the school keeps their children safe and that their children enjoy coming to school. They rate the quality of teaching very highly and believe that their children make good progress. They feel that any behaviour problems are dealt with effectively and that the school works hard to meet their children's particular needs. A small minority believes that the school could do more to help them support their children's learning. A very small number of parents and carers expressed concerns about provision in the sixth form. The inspection team investigated all of these issues and they were discussed with the school. It supports these views which are broadly reflected in this report. The inspection team believes that there are improvements that can be made that would further improve teaching and assessment.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Chads Catholic and Church of England 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 132 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1028 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	42	70	53	5	4	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	84	64	46	35	1	1	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	87	66	40	30	3	2	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	66	50	59	45	5	4	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	69	52	61	46	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	64	48	53	40	10	8	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	44	67	51	5	4	1	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)	69	52	53	40	4	3	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	69	52	54	41	6	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	74	56	50	38	5	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	38	62	47	12	9	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	71	54	56	42	2	2	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	75	57	52	39	3	2	2	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.

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.



11 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Chads Catholic and Church of England High School, Runcorn

The inspection team enjoyed meeting you on 9 and 10 March. We thought that you were friendly and polite. Your attitudes in lessons were positive and you seemed keen to learn. You told us that behaviour was good, that there is very little bullying, and that you feel safe in school. We agree with that. We think that your school is a very welcoming and orderly place where all students feel valued. You all get on very well together and the staff look after you very well.

Students make good progress. When lessons are challenging and active, you do particularly well. We have told the school that teaching is good although some lessons should make you work harder and help you learn more for yourself. Some of the marking and feedback from teachers could be clearer in helping you know what you need to do to improve.

The school has a good curriculum and this prepares you well for the world outside school. There are also many opportunities for you to take part in activities beyond school and we know that you enjoy these. This helps you to develop leadership and teamwork skills. We were impressed that you are sensitive to other people, reflect on what you do, and have a good understanding of people from other cultures.

The school is well led and knows what to do to get even better. The senior leaders know that students do not achieve as highly in the sixth form as they do at Key Stage 4. We have made some suggestions for the school to consider including: making learning as effective as possible in the small classes; working with other partners to provide an effective curriculum; and reviewing the number of courses available.

Once again, it was a pleasure to meet so many of you last week and we wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Jarrett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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