



St Julie's Catholic High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104712
LEA Liverpool
Inspection number 277211
Inspection dates 1 February 2006 to 2 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Mike McLachlan CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Speke Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Woolton
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Liverpool, Merseyside L25 7TN
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	0151 4286421
Number on roll	1392	Fax number	0151 4211399
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Geraldine Poole
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2000	Headteacher	Sister Ann Gammack

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Julie's is a larger than average, all girls Catholic high school, with an average size sixth form including a small number of boys. Pupils are drawn from a very wide area representing the full academic and social range. A significant proportion of pupils is drawn from areas of high deprivation. Attainment on entry to school is broadly average. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is above average. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English is very low. The school is a specialist Language College and has achieved the Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, which provides good value for money. Although the school identifies its strengths and weaknesses accurately, it modestly graded its effectiveness as satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are above average and represent good progress. There is room for some improvement in Year 9 science, where attainment is not quite as high as in English or mathematics. Personal development is good, but behaviour is outstanding. The quality of teaching is good, but the marking of pupils' work provides too little information about how they might improve. Moreover, there are not enough opportunities for independent study and for pupils to be actively involved in their learning. The curriculum is good. It is enhanced by the school's Language College status and its outstanding links with local schools and the community. There is a strong Christian and inclusive ethos. Good care, guidance and support help to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all pupils. Students are very well prepared and virtually all move on to higher education or work on leaving school. Parents and pupils are very supportive of the school and its values. Incisive leadership by the headteacher, the leadership team and governors identifies how the school needs to improve, particularly in respect of the sixth form. The improved monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is yet to be applied consistently by all middle managers. Nevertheless, developments since the last inspection demonstrate that the school has the capacity for further improvements.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree that the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is satisfactory. Standards in 2005 were below average and students did not achieve well. Students are now making satisfactory progress, but the school is right to judge that standards could be higher. Personal development is good and very good relationships exist between students and teachers. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Marking does not always make clear what needs to be improved and there are insufficient opportunities for personal study. A good curriculum offers a range of advanced level and vocational courses that caters well for the needs of all students. Care, support and guidance are good. Leadership is satisfactory: good plans to bring about improvements are in the early stages of implementation. Students and parents appreciate the support they receive, but students are right to want a more active approach to their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and progress in the sixth form and achievement in science by the end of Year 9.
- Ensure that marking is used consistently to help pupils and students know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils and students to be independent and active learners.

- Ensure monitoring and evaluation is used more consistently by managers to identify and share the most effective practice in teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school judges achievement and standards to be satisfactory, but recent significant improvements in GCSE results and work demonstrate that they are good. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, which is lower than at the time of the last inspection. There is a significant and growing proportion of pupils who join the school with below average attainment, particularly in literacy skills. In 2005 standards attained by the end of Year 9 were above average and progress was broadly satisfactory, although it was lower in science and mathematics than in English. Achievement in science is still a relative weakness. In 2005 standards achieved in Year 11 were above average, with around 70% of pupils achieving five A* to C grades and nearly all pupils achieving at least five A* to G passes. This represented good progress for these pupils. The trend is of improving results since the last inspection. Challenging targets, including those set through the Language College, are met. Pupils with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, from minority ethnic groups, and those who are learning English as an additional language progress well. Currently, progress is satisfactory in the sixth form despite a recent decline in standards in some subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school evaluates personal development and well-being as satisfactory, but the inspection judges these to be good. Christian values permeate the school; a Year 11 girl spoke for many when declaring that 'school is one big family'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is good. Attendance is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form; pupils and students enjoy their time in school. Very high expectations and the excellent relationships between staff and pupils result in outstanding behaviour and attitudes in lessons and around the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities mature well because of the good support they receive. Pupils are very courteous, supportive and generous in their work for good causes. Rewards and incentives are valued and consequences of misbehaviour understood well. Successes are celebrated and pupils feel a sense of worth. Personal, health, social and citizenship education is particularly effective. These programmes enable pupils and students to develop healthy lifestyles, make outstanding contributions to the community and prepare very well for adult life. Pupils and students value the opportunities to take responsibility. The school council, maturely led by sixth form students, take its duties seriously and makes every effort to tackle concerns held by any pupil.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school considers the quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory, but it is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. The recent drive to raise standards has resulted in stronger teaching in Years 10 and 11. In outstanding lessons the teaching contains infectious enthusiasm, sets a high level of challenge and uses a variety of approaches. These result in sustained concentration and excellent progress. In successful lessons, throughout the school, the positive relationship between teachers and pupils results in a harmonious atmosphere in which pupils achieve well. Skilful questioning and continuous assessment of learning enables pupils to understand the work and be actively involved in the development of ideas. Where teaching is satisfactory, there is absence of 'sparkle' because teachers dominate and provide limited opportunities for pupils and students to explain, study by themselves or take an active part in the lesson. This is particularly the case in some of the teaching in the sixth form and in Years 7 to 9. Assessment is satisfactory. However, there is some inconsistency in marking between subjects. Consequently, pupils and students do not always know what they have to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school evaluates its curriculum to be satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Inspectors judge it to be good throughout the school. Recent improvements in the curriculum make sure that it meets the needs of all pupils. Provision for students aged 14 to 19 is good and allows for good progression. As well as the wide range of traditional subjects at GCSE, AS and A levels, the addition of suitable vocational courses has enhanced the breadth and depth of provision. The support of other institutions is very effective in enabling courses to be tailored to meet individual needs. There is a wide range of extra curricular activities and enrichment activities. In line with the school's strong focus on inclusion, these are made accessible and affordable for all. Personal social and health education programmes provide good and often outstanding programmes to promote health and safety and prepare students for further study or work. An excellent example of innovative thinking is the Sunflower Centre, a recently acquired building opposite the school. Facilities here are being used very effectively to enhance the quality of both the curriculum and personal development. For example the centre has a hair and beauty salon equipped to professional standards and well furnished community rooms which are used by the pupils and students, partner schools and the community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures to ensure health, safety and child protection are in place and widely understood. Pupils feel safe and secure. They know who to turn to for help. There are effective procedures for dealing with the occasional behaviour or bullying issues. The pastoral team is a real strength and their work is valued by parents. For example, one commented that the school works hard to make such a large school feel 'small'. Monitoring of pupils and students by the pastoral team and subject leaders leads to the setting of targets and the tracking of progress. This information is shared well with parents. Better marking would help both pupils and students know what they need to do to improve their work. Specialist Language College status and a drive to extended school provision have led to outstanding links with primary schools, the community and with external agencies. Support at points of transition, on entering, leaving or within the school, are good. A significant and telling strength of the school is that virtually all pupils or students who leave St Julie's move on to university, college, employment or training.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are good overall and satisfactory with regard to the sixth form, despite the school's more modest evaluation. The headteacher, supported by a growing leadership team, both in numbers and skills, provides strong and incisive leadership. She has a clear vision for the school and sets very high expectations for staff and students. The school's self-evaluation clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses and, in pursuit of raising standards is occasionally, though understandably, hard when judging itself. Views of parents, pupils and other stakeholders are sought and acted on. The day to day work of the school and success of all students confirm its strong commitment to equality of opportunity. The senior team's analysis of performance data is robust and was, for example, used well to drive the improvements in examination performance at GCSE level in 2005. There is recognition that a similar effort is now needed to improve performance in the sixth form. Despite some outstanding work by middle managers, there is insufficient sharing of the most effective practice. Governors know and support the school well, constructively challenging senior and middle managers. They have worked well with the senior team to deal effectively with issues identified in the previous inspection and ensure the school's finances are managed efficiently. The leadership of the school clearly has the capacity and determination to bring about further improvements.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The attendance of learners	2	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	3
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We would like to thank you for the way that you greeted us during the inspection. We feel you represented yourselves and your school very well indeed.

We think you go to a good school. We are very impressed by the way in which you treat each other and your teachers. We think, given the size of the school and the vast array of buildings, that your behaviour inside and outside lessons is outstanding. You clearly grow into mature young women by the time you leave school.

We think that you make good progress and reach standards that are above average by the time you reach the end of Year 11. We are concerned that the standards in the sixth form are not as high, although the progress you make is satisfactory. We think you and your teachers need to concentrate on raising standards and achievement in the sixth form.

We think, overall, you are taught well in the main school and that teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory with some that is good. We, like a number of you, think that it would be helpful if you could be more actively involved in your learning and had more opportunities be independent learners.

We are impressed by the tracking systems that enable teachers to set targets and measure your progress through subject levels. We think it would be helpful if more comments were given in your books to help you understand what you need to do to improve.

We think that the school teaches you a wide range of academic and vocational subjects and you are given lots of enrichment opportunities. We think you are well cared for and that you show great understanding and care for others in your school, and in the wider world. We think you are well prepared to go on to higher education, work or training.

We think your school is well led and that the headteacher sets high standards which you and the teachers strive to reach. We think it would be helpful for the senior staff and subject leaders to monitor teaching more closely so as to share the best practice that we saw.

We certainly agree with the comments from one of you who said, 'the school is one big family'. We would all like to thank you again for the way in which you represented your school and wish you well for the future.