

Our Lady and St Chad Catholic Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104401
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	324039
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Cartwright HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	820
Sixth form	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr I Middleton
Headteacher	Miss M C Keelan
Date of previous school inspection	26 May 2006
School address	Old Fallings Lane Wolverhampton WV10 8BL
Telephone number	01902 558250
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is set in north Wolverhampton. It has a high proportion of students eligible for free school meals, and is in an area of relatively low economic prosperity. About two thirds of students are from a White British background. There is a high and increasing proportion of students whose first language is other than English. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is above average. The average attainment of pupils on entry to the school is lower than the national average, although the full range of abilities are represented in the school. It has been a specialist Sports College since 2005.

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, with several outstanding features that are characterised by outstanding care and inclusion of all students. The excellent leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are driving continuous improvement, evident in the continued significant rise in standards. The impact of the sports college specialism has been outstanding, and has transformed the involvement of the local community with the school. It has catalysed the development of an effective Key Stage 4 curriculum, which allows students to achieve well. Many students making remarkable progress compared to their starting points in Year 7. It is a lovely place to learn, students thoroughly enjoy being here, and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. One parents' comment captured the key strength of the school by stating that 'Teachers go the extra mile for pupils and I know from experience any concerns I have had regarding my child have been dealt with swiftly.'

Data are analysed and effective strategies quickly put into place – for example to speed up progress of more able students and, recently, to improve the curriculum and progress in Key Stage 3. The headteacher's approach cements the commitment of all staff to raising the personal aspirations of students and their families. Staff and students have responded to the headteacher's infectious enthusiasm and optimism, resulting in very good classroom relationships. The school is exceptionally effective in encouraging and engaging students at particular risk of losing touch with education. This high level of care, guidance and support results in the outstanding personal development and well-being of students. Sports sessions are very popular, and there are many other extra-curricular activities and trips, including a full range of performing arts sessions. Almost every student is involved in some sort of additional provision, and there are over 700 adults participating in school-based community activities through the specialist sports activities on a weekly basis. The vast majority of students behave very well in lessons and around the school. The school responds swiftly and effectively to resolve difficulties when they do arise. The school never gives up on its efforts to include students, whatever their difficulties and needs may be. The school has very capable resources to support them, along with the determination and patience to include and maintain them in the school family. Thanks to the determined efforts of the school, attendance figures are slowly improving, and are closing to the targets set for the main school by the Department of Children, Schools and Families.

Teaching is good. Students said their teachers were always helpful, and willing to give up their time to explain and reinforce difficult ideas, and this is a major reason why students enjoy learning so much. The best day-to-day marking clearly informs students of what is good, and what needs improving for them to make progress. For some subjects, students knew this 'by heart', but in other examples they did not clearly know how well they were doing, nor how to improve their standards. Students are not always in the habit of responding to good diagnostic marking.

The support for staff mirrors the excellent care and support of students. Despite a relatively high changeover of staff in the past eighteen months, new staff were very pleased with the quality of support and advice they had received from the senior

leaders of the school. Governance is particularly strong, and has maintained a consistently high quality ethos rooted in the Catholic foundations of the school, through astute recruitment and retention of staff.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Sixth form standards overall have been rising since the previous inspection as a result of the improving effectiveness of the sixth form. Sixth form students make good progress in relation to their skills at the end of Year 11. By the time they finish their courses, they are attaining broadly average standards at A level. They play a significant part in the social life of the school. For example, they organise and run the 'U Chooz' activity for the benefit of all the school's students who wish to enjoy recreational sports. The school's sports specialism is used very effectively to develop the leadership and group work skills of sixth form students. Students say they are encouraged to develop independent learning skills and consider this supports their progress and achievement. They also much appreciate the care and support they receive from both their tutors and their subject teachers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers' feedback and marking consistently informs students on what they need to do to improve, and encourage students to act upon that advice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The attainment of students when they start school in Year 7 is below average. They make the progress expected during Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, progress accelerates rapidly, mainly because students are very successful in their vocational courses. They achieve much better grades in them than would be predicted from their prior attainment in previous years. Consequently, overall standards by the end of Year 11 continued their rising trend in 2008 and most performance indicators are now in line with the national averages. The progress of students in English and mathematics during their school journey has been satisfactory. The school is continuing to improve support for students in these two subjects and the actions taken are now having an impact. Overall, therefore, students from all backgrounds and abilities achieve well. This includes students recently arrived from overseas for whom English is not their first language. The school leadership makes a very effective analysis of patterns in results and responds rapidly. For example, in 2008, students of low to middle ability achieved very well, compared to the satisfactory progress of more able learners. The school has responded by decreasing class size for more able groups. It has also increased the focus on developing the skills that students need to attain higher grades. The school's tracking records for the current Year 11 compared with those for the previous year suggests that these strategies are working well. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve equally well and many continue into the sixth form where they achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The excellent relationships that students enjoy with each other, and with staff, give a real sense of the school as a community. Students have a good understanding of, and respect for, the cultural diversity of the local area. Students treat each other and the building with respect. In this, they are well supported by the work of the learning resource centre and, when necessary, by the effective intervention by members of the senior leadership team. Students and their parents say they feel extremely safe and are valued as individuals. Instances of bullying and racist behaviour are very rare and dealt with swiftly. The recent adoption of the Year 7 house system has made younger students feel less apprehensive about the transfer from primary school.

The school's work as a sports college has led to high participation rates in out-of-hours sports activity. The school has gained Healthy School status, school meals offer a range of healthy options, and vending machines sell only healthy choices. There is a very positive relationship between staff and students. Parents overwhelmingly report that their children really enjoy coming to school, and students agree. Students have a very wide range of opportunities to take on responsibilities in school, to which they respond enthusiastically. Students speak with pride of their work leading fellow students on such issues as plans for Building Schools for the Future, as information and communication technology student leaders, and as part of the Raising Self-Esteem programme. Members of the school council feel their voice is important to the school, and they can point to improvements made in response to their views. The school prepares students well for their future economic well-being through good development of basic skills of literacy, numeracy and workplace skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most lessons are good, and students make significant progress because of the very positive and trusting relationships they have with their teachers. Teachers are well qualified, with a good match of subject expertise to lessons taught. Well planned lessons provide a rich variety of interactive learning opportunities, particularly where there is a good balance of teacher and student input. In these lessons, students thrive on the challenges, which makes for very enjoyable and interesting learning. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, excellent planning, lesson structure and class relationships stimulated outstanding, mature responses to the issues raised by the set text. The satisfactory lessons placed less demand on students, either because teachers directed activities that left students with little more to do than copy notes, or had not planned tasks that challenged the full range of abilities in the class.

Where students have a clear understanding of assessment criteria, for example in English and modern foreign languages, they effectively evaluate and monitor their own work and progress. The quality of day-to-day marking is variable within and

between departments. There were examples of good coursework marking and feedback in English where students say they know what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. Similar clear grading of work, with advice on how to get the next highest level, was seen in some science work but these good practices were not consistently evident. Most students are well informed about their academic progress, and understand the targets to which they are working, but are less certain how to achieve them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall and the school is responding to the variation in progress of students between key stages. The school is using Year 7 to develop a new Key Stage 3 curriculum to improve its match to the needs and interests of learners. This has created good opportunities for cross-curricular working allowing students to build on knowledge gained in other curriculum areas. At Key Stage 4, there is already a good range of work-related, academic and vocational courses. Personalised pathways through various courses work exceptionally well for the middle and lowest band of learners. Almost all students complete at least one course in modern foreign languages, with more able students studying two. More able students can also study three separate sciences. Partnerships with other providers have extended opportunities for learners, particularly in the field of work-related learning. There is a local post-16 consortium that has previously provided an adequate curriculum. Now, the school ensures an even better match of course to student learning styles, primarily by emphasising vocational routes to success. For example, students can study applied law via a BTEC National qualification.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school meets all statutory safeguarding, health, safety, and child protection requirements. The care and support for individual students is outstanding. Students are encouraged to look out for each other. They say teachers and other staff know them well and value them as individuals. They appreciate the care and support they receive from tutors, subject staff, mentors, the school counsellor and peer mentors. If students have a problem, they are confident they can find an adult to help them. In this, they are well supported by the work of the student support centre and, when necessary, by the effective intervention by members of the senior leadership team. This excellent and inclusive support has ensured relatively low temporary exclusions and no permanent exclusion. Students responded well to the outstanding school assembly seen by inspectors. It celebrated cultural diversity within and beyond the school community, and it made a positive contribution to community cohesion. The sense of a close and supportive 'family' in which individual children are known well by school staff is remarkable and is evidence of the successful delivery of the school's inclusive Catholic ethos.

Attendance is satisfactory and improving. The school has robust procedures for promoting good attendance. Students and families with persistently high absence are intensively supported by the work undertaken by the home-school liaison worker, the school counsellor, school mentors and other pastoral staff. Governors have noted some setbacks in the efficiency of local authority (LA) education welfare services to

the school as the LA restructures its centrally funded provision. Attendance and retention rates in the sixth form are satisfactory, and the school does what it can to improve them. One factor identified by the school but out of its control relates to the economic demands on students, such that many have substantial part-time work commitments. The school's programme of careers information, advice and guidance is good and is valued by students. Those in the sixth form value particularly the help and guidance they receive with university entrance and career progression.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

School leaders continue to set aspirational and very challenging targets, which the students continue to exceed. The commitment to include every child, irrespective of background or ability, and to do whatever is possible to overcome barriers to learning is outstanding. Leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. They are continuously seeking to improve curriculum provision to better match learners' needs and interests. This developmental approach is mirrored by middle leaders, for example in a much more tailored approach to English teaching in Year 10, and the innovative work in Year 7 to improve challenge for more able students alongside support for more vulnerable learners. The development of the school and its local community, driven by the inclusive Catholic ethos and caring attitude of school leaders and staff, has been substantially boosted throughout the sports college specialism. As a result, the school is leading community cohesion for its locality, not just contributing to it. Local community agencies report substantial improvements in the community life around the school. For example, there are now 32 sports clubs involved with the school compared with eight prior to specialist sports college status. Recent organisational changes have enhanced the effectiveness of leadership and management in the sixth form, securing a good capacity to further improve it. This has been instrumental in developing the improved curriculum offer both in school and across the consortium that is better tailored to the diverse needs of all students.

The school manages staff retention and recruitment well despite the challenges it presents in terms of managing consistency of day-to-day routines such as marking; in the past two years, over a quarter of teachers have been new to the school and there is a relatively high proportion of temporary staff at present. Governors ask sharp questions that get behind the headline school performance figures. They provide a high level of professional scrutiny of the work of the school. Accommodation is used well, and the school is expecting significant building improvements in the near future. The school is set in well-maintained grounds. Specialist sports college resources have been exceptionally well used to enhance community use and participation.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

Achievement and standards

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

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

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1	2
The attendance of learners	3	3
The behaviour of learners	1	1
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	2	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
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?	1	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B



1 May 2009

Dear Students

**Inspection of Our Lady and St Chad Catholic Sports College,
Wolverhampton, WV10 8BL**

Thank you for your very positive welcome and enthusiastic conversations we enjoyed during our visit to your school. This is a good school characterised by its outstanding care and inclusion of all students. It is a lovely place to learn, you thoroughly enjoy being here, and your parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. Most lessons are good, and you are making good progress, thanks to the very positive and trusting relationships with your teachers. The excellent care and support provided by the school to each of you as individuals is driving your outstanding personal development. The curriculum for Year 10 and 11 students is particularly effective in ensuring the majority of Year 11 students gain at least five good grades. Sixth form students also achieve well.

The school continues to improve, because of excellent school leadership that is most obvious in your headteacher's dedication and optimism, and this is shared by her staff. She is right in believing in all of you, and successful in making sure you are 'the best you can be'.

There are always areas that could be better still. Attendance is one of them, although the school is already working very hard on this, and we believe it is doing all it can. You yourselves need to support the school's efforts by making sure you come into school. The other area concerns feedback to you. We found that in many lessons, teachers did give students clear advice on how to improve their work, but not in every case. We also found examples where, despite the good advice, some students had not taken enough notice, for example by completing work as advised. This is why we suggest the school should:

- Ensure teachers' feedback and marking consistently tells you what you need to do to improve, and encourages you to act upon that advice.

Best wishes for your future
Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector