

St Anthony's Catholic Girls' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108871
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	309825
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	1363
6th form	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Clare Barrett
Headteacher	Mrs Monica Shepherd
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2003
School address	Thornhill Terrace Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR2 7JN
Telephone number	0191 5537700
Fax number	0191 5537699

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Anthony's, which has specialist technology status, is a Roman Catholic girls' school. This is an oversubscribed and larger than average sized secondary school with below average numbers of minority ethnic students and those eligible for free school meals. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. The school serves a broad catchment area, with some students coming from areas which suffer from significant levels of social deprivation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Anthony's is a good school, providing a good quality of education for its students. The school's sixth form provision for personal development and well-being, and the care, guidance and support provided for the students are outstanding.

The school has a very strong and caring ethos, based firmly on its spiritual inheritance and its success in bringing to life the values of the Roman Catholic faith. Students, their parents, and all those who work in the school share a common set of values, which contribute to its many successes. The school is a harmonious community, and values and appreciates all students, including those from different faiths, cultures and ethnic heritage. Students contribute very positively to a range of community activities, including fundraising for local and national charities.

The school consistently and successfully maintains high standards at the end of Key Stages 3, 4 and the sixth form, which ensures that the students make good overall progress throughout their time at the school. Parents, quite understandably, place a high value on the school's academic achievements, and many took the opportunity in the pre-inspection questionnaire to praise the teachers for all the help and support that their children receive. Parents and students also recognise and value highly the many and varied out of lesson opportunities available, all of which further enhance the provision and reputation of the school. Students are very positive about the school, and those who spoke with inspectors were unanimous in their praise for teachers, the learning opportunities in and out of lessons, and the enjoyment that they experience from attending a successful and caring school.

The school is led well, with the headteacher providing the drive and enthusiasm for maintaining high standards in all aspects of school life. She is ably assisted by senior and middle managers, who work together effectively to support teachers in lessons, and support, guide and care for all students. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive of the school. The combined effectiveness of all leaders and managers gives the school good capacity to make further improvements.

Teaching is good overall, and contributes to the exemplary behaviour of students. However, although lesson plans are detailed and are used well, they currently place a greater emphasis on teaching activities rather than on the skills, knowledge and understanding that the students should acquire and develop. The school collects a good range of assessment data, which are used effectively to identify challenging targets for the students, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Separate subject departments analyse students' performance well, including those who underachieve. However, the coordination of assessment data for all those formally identified as having learning difficulties and/disabilities is not undertaken centrally, which means that staff are only able to focus on those with identified difficulties in their own subject.

The school's specialist status for technology makes a positive contribution to the curricular provision at all key stages, and is helping to create very effective links with a number of local and national partners.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall quality of the sixth form provision is good. It is effective and well managed. The retention rate of students from the main school to the sixth form is very high, reflecting the

very high regard within the local area for the quality of the post-16 provision at the school. The examination results for 2007 improved on previous years, continuing the trend of good standards. Students make good progress because their work is carefully monitored and their learning needs are met well. By the end of Year 13, students are sensitive, mature and articulate members of the school community, ready for life as adults. Students say they feel they are listened to and cherish the opportunities to take up responsibilities; for example, in work with local primary schools as part of the Community Sports Leader's Award. Students enjoy being at school. 'It's a good school where you get lots of support' is a typical comment. Their high levels of attendance confirm this. The curriculum is extensive and has been successfully enhanced to meet individual needs, for example, by sharing courses with a local boys' school. The school has chosen to limit the number of vocational courses because of a lack of accommodation, and because school-based surveys reveal that a more traditional curriculum is currently wanted by the existing students. Teaching is good overall. In the best lessons, teaching is lively and engages the pupils' interest, enabling them to accurately assess the quality of their work. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge also contributes to the rapid pace of learning seen in the most effective lessons. Good use is made of the school's resources for learning, including computers, to aid the presentation and production of work. However, although students may borrow school laptops, insufficient opportunity is provided for them to develop independent learning skills. Students receive excellent care, guidance and support and are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the focus on learning by identifying the key skills, knowledge and aspects of understanding that students should acquire in every lesson, and ensure that these are shared with students.
- Coordinate the collection of assessment data for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across all subjects, as an aid to them making even better progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. The care for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also good because of the focused support given by teachers and teaching assistants. However, there are some inconsistencies in the systems for self, peer and staff assessment across the school, including the evaluation methods used by different subject departments to assess the standards and progress made by the students. This means that although there is effective monitoring of students' subject progress, the cohort of students on the special educational needs register is not yet analysed as a separate group. Accordingly, any trends or issues for this cohort across the subject range are not easy to identify.

The school takes its duty to safeguard the students very seriously, and all the required child protection procedures are in place. All those students who spoke with inspectors said they feel safe and well cared for as a result of the inclusion, equality and diversity policies in practice. Parents also value the support given by teachers. As one student said: 'There are always teachers you can talk to for support and guidance'.

Excellent student behaviour and an ethos encouraging respect for all means that exclusions are extremely low and attendance good. Although a minority of students reported feeling nervous about moving to the school, a feeling typical for any new entrant, transition is well managed. The summer school for feeder primary schools, which allow the new students to meet teachers and other students, is working well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

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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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 September 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of St Anthony's Catholic Girls' School, Sunderland, SR2 7JN.

You will know that I recently visited your school, with four other inspectors, to see how well you are doing in your lessons, and how your teachers help you to do the very best you can.

You will, of course, want to know what we have said about your school, and if we are asking it to make any improvements. Given what we saw, what we heard from you, your parents and the staff, we are able to say that you go to a good school that helps to you to achieve well. Other good things that inspectors saw include:

- good standards in the main school and sixth form. This means that the vast majority of you make good progress during your time at the school;
- the school provides a good environment for you to learn and, as many of you said, you enjoy the Roman Catholic atmosphere within the school because it makes you feel safe and welcomed, irrespective of where you come from;
- your teachers care and support you well;
- you enjoy attending school because lessons are fun, and you can take part in a number of extra activities at lunchtime, the end of the day, or other times when not in lessons;
- there are many opportunities to help you choose a healthy lifestyle, including eating healthily and being active;
- the sixth form provision is good overall and outstanding for personal development and well-being, and care, guidance and support;
- the school is led well, and teaching is good.

As in almost all schools, there are always things that could be improved. We are, therefore, asking the school to:

- ensure that your teachers identify what they expect you to learn in lessons, and share these with you in a way that you can easily understand;
- make better use of the information that your teachers collect about those of you who have some type of learning difficulty so that you can make even better progress in your learning.

You all have an important part to play in helping the school to do even better. This means that you need to continue working as hard as you can so that you are successful in everything that the school offers you.

I wish you all the very best for your future.

Brian Blake, HMI

on behalf of the inspection team