



St Francis Xavier's College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104718
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 287017
Inspection dates 31 January –1 February 2007
Reporting inspector Gina White HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	High Lee
School category	Foundation		Beaconsfield Road, Liverpool
Age range of pupils	11–18		Merseyside L25 6EG
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	0151 2881000
Number on roll (school)	1290	Fax number	0151 2881001
Number on roll (6th form)	220		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr H King
		Headteacher	Mr Leslie Rippon
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	31 January –1 February 2007	287017

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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

The college is larger than others of its type. It serves the Catholic community in south Liverpool and includes a varied social catchment area with above average disadvantage. Boys only are in Years 7 to 11 but the sixth form is mixed. Most students are from White British backgrounds and five percent are of minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average at 13%. Fewer students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities than the national average and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is also below average. The school gained specialist status as a mathematics and computing college in September 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 an improving and inclusive college and it provides a good education for its students. The educational purpose of the college, 'life in all its fullness' is very well demonstrated in the good personal development of students and the wide range of curriculum enrichment and activities. The rich and varied opportunities provided by the college enable students to make an excellent contribution to the local, national and international community and this in turn contributes significantly to students' achievement and enjoyment. The college has a good and well deserved reputation in the city and students are proud to attend it. The majority of parents who responded to the school survey had positive views of the college.

In recent years, despite a trend of improving attainment, some students have not achieved as well as they were expected to. Strategies to tackle underachievement have increased since 2005. Better setting of targets and systems to track students' progress, coupled with focused support to individual students, mentoring and revision programmes have led to improvement. Year 9 students and those taking GCSEs worked hard and results rose significantly in 2006. The small numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved well, as did students from Black and ethnic minority heritages. Throughout the college, the focus on improving learning is strong and standards and achievement are good. Students' attitudes to learning are good. Students say they enjoy and value the mentoring schemes and find the half-termly assessments useful in helping them monitor their learning.

Teaching and learning are good overall and there is much good practice. The use of data and information from assessments and teachers' marking is not used consistently by all teachers to identify gaps in students' understanding and consequently some lessons are not sufficiently tailored to meet their needs.

The curriculum is good. The college is successful in helping students to achieve their aspirations and ambitions: a high proportion stay on in education, learning and training. The wider curriculum and personal development opportunities enable many to leave the college with additional qualifications in sports coaching, music and awards from the Duke of Edinburgh's scheme. Specialist status is already contributing well in providing opportunities to promote learning across the college. Many attend the 'night owl' and 'early bird' sessions to use the computer-based support systems, to undertake research for class and homework assignments, or to receive specific support and guidance from teachers. Students appreciate these sessions and spoke warmly of the commitment of staff and the guidance they receive.

The care provided to students is good. Parents' views of the support for their sons' needs are very positive. One of the college partners emphasised this strength when she said, 'This college goes out of its way to put in place support for the small numbers of vulnerable students.' Students spoken to were clear that they felt safe in college and that any incidents of bullying were dealt with effectively. Behaviour is good: almost all students behave very well in lessons and around the college and they are polite, courteous with visitors and supportive of each other. However, the occasional disruptive

behaviour of a minority of students is a concern to the college and to a small number of the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire.

Leadership and management are good. The pace of change has accelerated since the headteacher and new senior leadership team took up their appointments two years ago. They have responded swiftly to the challenge of raising standards and improving achievement in the college. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision are embedded at all levels of leadership and management. Teaching and learning are monitored extensively and, although improved since the last inspection, the findings are not drawn together robustly enough to drive improvement consistently across the college.

Specialist college status has enhanced the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics in the curriculum and has contributed to developing a wider range of teaching strategies. Links with local schools have been established and partnership work is good. The college's regular surveys of parents and students show increasing levels of satisfaction.

The capacity to improve is good and the college provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The college is part of a collaborative and makes joint sixth form provision with three other schools. The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory, with some good features. There are strengths in the personal development of the students but the college has not yet established a consistent record of good progress and achievement in learning. Standards in the sixth form are below the national average. Students' achievement overall is satisfactory given that many enter with below average GCSE results. New initiatives to raise standards and boost achievement by setting more challenging targets and adopting better systems to track progress have been introduced. These good initiatives are not yet fully embedded and it is too soon to assess their impact on progress. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, reflecting a wider variation in quality than is found within the main school. Students say they value their very good relationships with teachers and fellow students. They identify strongly with the values of the college and eagerly seek to take advantage of the good opportunities they have to support college life, such as helping teachers in local primary schools become more effective in using computers in learning. The number of students who successfully complete their courses is high, reflecting the good guidance they receive when selecting them. The good personal development and provision for care and curriculum reflect good overall leadership and management.

What the school should do to improve further

- Tailor lessons to better meet the needs of all students.
- Raise achievement in the sixth form.
- Use findings from monitoring and evaluation to drive improvement in teaching and learning consistently across the college.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The students' standards are securely above average for boys and their achievement is good. The underlying trend in results by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 is upwards. The college met its statutory targets at the end of both key stages in 2006.

Students enter the college with above average attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3 results in the 2005 national tests in English, mathematics and science were well above the average for boys nationally. Provisional results for 2006 show further improvement.

Results at GCSE have fluctuated in recent years and achievement in some years has been no better than satisfactory. In 2005, GCSE results were broadly average but the results in 2006 show considerable improvement. More than 60% of the boys gained five or more passes at grades A* to C and more than half did so with grade C or above in both English and mathematics. These figures are well above the national figures for boys and indicate good progress. The 2006 results also show good progress by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, an improvement on 2005 when these pupils did not do as well as expected.

Recent improvements in results are reflected in work seen during the inspection and in the monitoring information provided by the college. The college's monitoring data show that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from Black or other minority ethnic groups are maintaining good progress. Students' progress is closely monitored and any boy at risk of not meeting his targets receives help and support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' attendance and behaviour are good and improving. The college has significantly reduced exclusions through the use of new support systems and internal inclusion. The strong faith and ethos of the college are well reflected in students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many students develop and demonstrate their growing confidence, good citizenship and care for others through participation in the college's school council and the city's school parliament and their extensive involvement in charity work. In the main, students adopt healthy lifestyles: they have a good awareness of healthy living and most participate in over two hours of sport a week.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the sixth form and good in the main college. In all lessons teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, class management is generally strong and they have very good relationships with students. With the contribution of support assistants, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in lessons. In the best lessons, tasks and activities are well planned to challenge and motivate students. Expectations are made clear to students. Their progress is monitored well throughout the lesson and opportunities to assess and consolidate learning at the end are fully developed. Teachers' skilled questioning helps to clarify and develop students' understanding and promotes their learning. As a result, students engage well in lessons and enjoy learning. On occasions, where teaching and learning are less successful, students spend too much time listening or they participate in tasks that do not stretch them. In some instances, where students are insufficiently supported or challenged, they lose interest and are easily distracted.

The use of data to set targets and monitor performance is established. However, not all teachers use the information consistently to tailor lessons to meet the full range of needs and abilities. In most lessons students know their target grades and the levels at which they are working. However, students are not always clear about what precisely they need to do to reach the next level or grade.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students of all abilities are well catered for and, as a result of good timetabling arrangements, can be moved easily to classes where learning is pitched to meet their needs. The impact of specialist status is well demonstrated through the expansion of mathematics and ICT courses at all key stages. Gifted and talented students have good opportunities for accelerated study. Curriculum reviews and good timetabling arrangements have led to a greater variety of options in Key Stage 4. They help all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to gain qualifications that reflect their abilities and aspirations. Students similarly enjoy an extensive breadth of curriculum provision in the sixth form. Students say that 'the school helps to give you what you want' and this encourages them to stay in education and complete their courses. The curriculum is further enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. An increasing number of students are taking up out-of-hours support to promote their achievement and enjoyment. Work-related learning is well developed in Key Stage 4 but the college recognises the need to improve this for younger students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding students are in place and meet current requirements. Students say they feel safe and there is always someone to talk to if they need help. Effective induction procedures ensure students settle quickly. In addition, sixth form 'buddies' provide effective support and are appreciated by Year 7 students. Advice and guidance at times of transition are strengths in the provision and are well matched to individual needs. In contrast, insufficient guidance is provided to students in some lessons to help them reach their academic targets. Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable are very well supported. Arrangements to secure advice and referral to specialist agencies work effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear focus on raising achievement for every student. This vision is shared by governors and at all levels of management. It is founded firmly on a shared understanding of the strengths and the weaknesses in the college's provision and a determination to raise standards. The plan of action to tackle these issues is well targeted. Data are beginning to be used more robustly. Expectations of what students should achieve have increased and more challenging targets have been set. The leadership team effectively challenges and supports weaker subjects and departments. This is leading to improvements in the quality of provision and better outcomes for students. For example, achievement in mathematics and science improved in 2006. Issues from the last inspection have been tackled well: ICT has improved and is now a significant strength of the college. Systems to check regularly the quality of teaching and learning are now embedded throughout the college. Senior staff have an accurate view of the quality of individual lessons. However, strengths and weaknesses in teaching are not yet brought together and evaluated consistently in order to drive improvement.

Governors discharge their responsibilities effectively. They are supportive and well informed. They exercise challenge through questioning and make informed decisions. The specialist school status is used effectively to expand the opportunities in the curriculum for students to study and to strengthen links with the community.

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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?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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	

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	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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	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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
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	2	
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

Thank you for making the inspectors welcome during our recent inspection of your college. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and listening to your views of the college. Please pass on our thanks to your parents who responded to the questionnaire and assure them we read every one! We found that St Francis Xavier's is an improving college. It provides you with a good education and cares for and supports you very well in your personal development. We think it lives up very well to its promise to prepare you for 'life in all its fullness'.

Further good features include the following.

- You make an outstanding contribution to your local, national and international community.
- We were impressed by your good behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning: some of you told us that you enjoy and value the support you get from your teachers and others. Many of you enjoy the mentoring schemes and attend the night owl and early bird sessions.
- Standards and achievement in the college are rising: they are good in the main college and satisfactory in the sixth form. The good curriculum and wide range of opportunities provided through sport, music and specialist status help many of you gain additional qualifications and experiences that support you in achieving your aspirations and ambitions.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and satisfactory in the sixth form and there is much good practice.

However, there are some points that the college might improve, these are:

- tailor lessons to meet better the needs of every student. You can help your teachers do this by letting them know if you don't understand or are struggling to keep up
- make sure students in the sixth form achieve higher standards
- make sure everyone uses the findings from the school's regular checking of the teaching and learning consistently so that it improves.