

Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133672
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	360561
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Bernard Campbell 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	780
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Mike Finlay
Headteacher	Mr John Sharples
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of their time in classes, observed 28 lessons and 26 teachers, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement plans, monitoring records and safeguarding documentation. They also took account of questionnaires from 145 parents and carers, 130 students and 41 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Evidence of satisfactory and improving learning and progress.
- The consistency of leaders at all levels in driving improvement in teaching, learning and students' outcomes.
- The impact of teaching and assessment on learning and progress.

Information about the school

Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School serves the dioceses of Liverpool and Chester. It is a little smaller than the average secondary school with fewer than the average number of minority ethnic students. A higher than average proportion of students has special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. It became a specialist music college in 2008.

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

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The headteacher and senior staff have established a positive and inclusive Christian ethos which successfully promotes the personal well-being and development of students, some features of which are good and some are outstanding. Leaders are less successful in promoting student achievement which remains satisfactory.

Senior leaders have been effective in raising attainment in 2009 from low to below average as a result of well-planned actions at Key Stage 4 and these improvements have been sustained in 2010. In 2009, GCSE results were significantly below average in English and mathematics. In 2010, GCSE English results improved markedly as a result of improved leadership and teaching. In mathematics, the improving trend was reversed in 2010 and there was a dip in the results. The progress made in mathematics is satisfactory. In 2008, Year 11 students made satisfactory progress overall and in 2009 they underachieved. In 2010, the school's benchmarked data indicates that Year 11 students made satisfactory progress.

Over the last three years there has been a year-on-year improvement in the attainment of boys but the performance of girls has been more variable. In 2009, higher ability girls underachieved and effective actions taken by the school led to a significant increase in 2010 in the proportion of girls who gained A* and A grades. However, school data indicate that, in 2010, middle-ability girls underachieved at GCSE. The school does not identify the underperformance of groups early or precisely enough to carry out preventative action.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Many students are involved in artistic, sporting and cultural activities. Participation in the school's music specialism is exceptionally high. Significant numbers of students choose to join in spiritual and religious activities in school. They develop a direct understanding of different religions and cultures through practical activities and international links. Students make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community through a variety of enterprising community projects. They have many good opportunities to develop their leadership skills and their sense of values. A significant number of students are involved in the school council and its 'action teams'. Students make a good contribution to the work of the governing body.

Much of the teaching is good and some is outstanding. However, there is too much satisfactory teaching to ensure good learning and progress. On occasion, teaching is

inadequate. The good practice in the use of assessment seen in some lessons is not applied consistently across the school. Good relationships and behaviour in lessons contribute positively to learning. In some lessons, students lack challenge.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum effectively meets the range of students' needs and interests and there is a very good range of enrichment activities. The developing Key Stage 3 curriculum is strengthening the learning of skills, including thinking skills. The school works closely and effectively with a wider range of agencies to support vulnerable students and to ensure that all students receive good pastoral care and guidance.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Attainment has risen from a low level and there is evidence of secure improvement in the progress made in English and in the overall progress made by students. The school has put systems in place to improve the quality of teaching and the use of assessment information but these have not had sufficient impact on improving progress. Common procedures for monitoring and evaluation have been established but there is inconsistency in the rigour with which these are carried out by senior and middle leaders. The school has recently acquired a new data management system. At present, the management and use of data lacks promptness and precision in analysing progress and identifying underachievement. Self-evaluation is honest and broadly accurate but lacks sharpness in tackling key areas of improvement. The school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment to the national average and ensure that all students achieve expected or good progress.
- Improve the management and analysis of data so that:
 - the underperformance of any group is identified early
 - prompt and precise action is taken which accelerates the progress of students.
- Improve the quality of teaching, by ensuring that:
 - assessment information is used consistently to provide challenges which match students' learning needs
 - students are given more opportunities to reflect on their learning
 - students receive more guidance on how to improve.
- Eradicate instances of underachievement and variations in performance, by ensuring that:
 - the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the performance of departments is consistent and rigorous
 - all leaders are effectively held to account for the performance of students.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with broadly average attainment. However, attainment at the end of Year 11 is still below average. Evidence of improved results in the last two years and improved learning in English and mathematics across the school demonstrate that learning and progress are satisfactory and improving securely. In 2009, the school made a significant improvement in the proportion of students that gained five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics from low to below average. In 2010, there was a further overall improvement in the results gained by students. In science, the proportion gaining two good GCSE grades in 2009 reached the national average and improved further in 2010, due to the provision of a variety of courses that match the abilities and interests of students. A significant fall in the take-up of modern foreign languages has begun to be reversed. In geography, attainment is poor as a result of weak teaching. The take-up and results in music at Key Stage 4 are exceptionally high.

In 2009, the progress made by students in English was unsatisfactory but improved significantly in 2010. Over the last three years there has been a decline in achievement in English by higher ability students at Key Stage 3. The school has recently reorganised and updated the Key Stage 3 English curriculum and has improved the use of assessment information in teaching. Although it is too early to measure any improvement in students' progress over time, observations showed that learning is good in English lessons. In mathematics, students make satisfactory progress and Key Stage 3 results have improved.

Over the last three years, students who receive support in school for their special educational needs have improved their GCSE results. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities who need extra support have had increased success in gaining qualifications at grades D - G. Benchmarked school data shows that in 2010, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities made satisfactory progress at GCSE, although those with low attendance underachieved.

Students are willing and cooperative in lessons. In the best lessons, they enjoy the challenge of being made to think. They also enjoy working cooperatively in practical activity. However, in some lessons they spend too long listening to the teacher. On occasion they are not sufficiently challenged or guided in their learning and have insufficient opportunity to review their learning.

Students feel very safe in school. Bullying and racist incidents are rare and are rapidly and effectively dealt with. An excellent drama workshop was observed that highlighted the dangers of carrying knives. Behaviour is good and school records show a reduction in the incidence of disruptive behaviour in lessons. There is a calm, relaxed atmosphere and most students enjoy school.

Students are very aware of factors that affect their health. They are complementary about the quality of food in their canteen, but some are put off by the queues and cramped conditions. The positive spiritual dimension to the school supports students' emotional well-being, and all students have adults they can turn to for advice and

support. Students develop very good personal skills and communicate well with adults. They are polite and considerate. Their attendance is average and they are punctual. They develop good basic skills in information and communication technology, although their qualifications in English and mathematics are below average. They develop aspirations for higher education and a high proportion stays in education, training or employment at age 16.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

In the most effective lessons, teachers have high aspirations for the students and set challenging tasks. Teachers inspire the students and inform them clearly about the understanding and skills to be acquired. In the better lessons, teachers assess the needs of their students quickly and precisely, and adapt what they do to ensure all students understand. Where teaching is less effective, there is too much teacher talk and students are passive. There are few opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and they are not guided in how to improve. There is a lack of challenging materials and tasks for the most able, and too little adapted material for the least able.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides a good range of qualifications including diplomas and young apprenticeships. The curriculum is enhanced by cross-curricular days which develop students' personal, learning and thinking skills. Students value and enjoy these. Religious education has a high profile and is consistent with the ethos of the school. Many participate in and enjoy enrichment activities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some students have worked with the Northern Chamber Orchestra, while others play in a steel band. Most departments run clubs and trips and these include the Chinese club and a visit to Auschwitz.

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

The school has many striking examples of the impact of support for vulnerable students. A 'passport to success' programme of one-to-one support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities resulted in one of the group being elected by his peers to be head boy. The daily after-school and holiday youth club, 'the boiler room', is popular with many students and makes good provision for leisure, learning and mentoring for vulnerable students. Transition arrangements with primary schools and post-16 providers are effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders are in the process of strengthening accountability procedures and they have correctly prioritised the analysis of data to drive improvement. Staff and students have welcomed the more frequent assessments and analysis of progress against challenging targets. This information has begun to inform departmental evaluation, planning and performance management. The formal observation of lessons is accurate but based on pre-announced visits to lessons. In addition, lesson observations are not sufficiently well informed by data about the progress made in individual classes. As a result, the school's picture of the quality of teaching and learning is too rosy. Decisive actions have been taken to tackle weaknesses in individual performance but in a few cases action has been too slow.

The school has a good governing body which is developing an effective role in monitoring and questioning the effectiveness of school strategies and their impact on students' progress and attainment. It has begun to engage energetically and purposefully with middle leaders and with student representatives. The governing body plays an effective role in promoting partnerships with the wider community.

Administrative procedures for safeguarding are thorough and actions are well recorded by staff and regularly monitored by the governing body. The school works well with other agencies and is robust in following up cases. There is good site security that is constantly reviewed and improved as necessary. The school has a positive relationship with most groups of parents and carers. Systems of communication with parents and carers are regular and varied and the school systematically gathers parental views. It responded constructively to their views about improvements to parents' evenings.

Equal opportunities are good because of the wide range of effective strategies for including all types of students in the life of the school. A high proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and gifted and talented students participate in the wide range of music activities and boys' participation has been increased through 'boys only' music activities. The school has targeted and improved some aspects of girls' performance but is aware that this is still variable.

The school has systematically developed an extensive range of partnerships that contributes positively to learning and personal achievement. Community cohesion is good within the school and the locality, as a result of well-planned activity and partnership work. The global dimension is strong through links with a number of countries and the school places a strong emphasis on learning about cultural and religious diversity.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers said they are happy with the school. They believe their children enjoy school and feel their child is safe. They think that the school helps their child to have a healthy lifestyle. Parents and carers believe that teaching is good, whereas inspectors judge it to be satisfactory.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sir Thomas Boteler 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 145 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 780 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	64	44	72	50	6	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	61	42	77	53	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	57	39	74	51	6	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	38	70	48	10	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	49	34	83	57	5	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	28	83	57	11	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	24	95	66	9	6	0	0
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)	46	32	83	57	3	2	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	30	82	57	10	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	37	69	48	7	5	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	26	87	60	7	5	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	63	43	73	50	2	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	70	48	65	45	5	3	1	1

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 is for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring term 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



20 September 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School,
Warrington, WA4 1JL**

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much indeed. We judged that yours is a satisfactory school. Almost all of you said that the headteacher and senior staff do a good job. These were the things we liked most about your school.

- Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, and many of you are involved in artistic, sporting and cultural activities, especially music.
- Students make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community through enterprising school and community projects.
- The curriculum provides you with a good range of courses and qualifications.
- Those of you with particular needs get good support from staff.

To help the school to improve further, we have said that senior leaders should ensure that:

- attainment reaches the national average and that you all achieve expected or good progress
- analysis of your progress is sharp and any underachievement is tackled quickly
- all teaching uses assessment information well so that:
 - lessons always challenge you and meet your needs
 - you have more opportunities to reflect on learning
 - you receive more guidance on how to improve.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

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