



# St Chad's Catholic High School

Inspection report

**Better  
education  
and care**

Unique Reference Number 111453  
 Local authority Halton  
 Inspection number 288964  
 Inspection dates 21 September 2006  
 Reporting inspector Mr Terry Holland HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Grangeway
School category	Voluntary aided		Halton Lodge
Age range of pupils	11-18		Runcorn
			Cheshire
			WA7 5HY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01928 564106
Number on roll (school)	904	Fax number	
Number on roll (6th form)	79		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr G Pitts
Date of previous school inspection	3-6 December 2001	Headteacher	Mr A Graley

Age group 11-18	Inspection date(s) 21 September 2006	Inspection no. 288964
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. During the course of this one day visit, inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior staff, some curriculum team leaders and lead professionals responsible for a number of pastoral and academic support programmes, representative groups of pupils from across the school, and held a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body. A small sample of lessons was visited. The school provided a wide range of documentation, including recent pupil performance data, to support its comprehensive self-evaluation. Over 470 parent questionnaires were returned, enabling the inspection to gather the views of well over half the parents with children at the school.

## Description of the school

St Chad's serves the Catholic community of Runcorn, though around one in seven pupils are from non-Catholic backgrounds. The school has been a Language College since 2001 and has recently been re-designated as a Specialist Language College and has achieved the International School Award. Along with the local authority, it supports other Halton schools in early language learning and the delivery of modern foreign languages. It continues to maintain a small sixth form, though numbers this year have declined slightly. The school has just begun a substantive four year programme of new building to provide much needed new accommodation and sports facilities for pupils and the community.

The population of the school is predominantly White British; the number of children from minority ethnic groups, as well as those who do not speak English as their main language, is very low, reflecting the make-up of the overall population in Halton. The area is one of widespread deprivation. Well over a quarter of the pupils in the school are being supported by strategies and a range of agencies because they are potentially disadvantaged and vulnerable to underachievement due to social or learning difficulties. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

**Grade: 2**

St Chad's is a good school with many outstanding features; it provides a good education for its pupils. This is a school where every child really does matter. It exemplifies its values by doing all in its power to maximise the life chances of its pupils in an environment that provides a strong spiritual and moral ethos and which both supports and challenges children and young people to do their best and achieve their potential. In their response to the questionnaire, almost all parents recognise this and are overwhelmingly positive in their support for the school. The inspection confirms their view that their children enjoy school, make good progress, are safe and well supported, and that the school is very well led and managed.

The majority of children enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average or below. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils achieve standards that are at or above the average nationally. By the time they leave the main school, the majority have reached levels of achievement that are higher than expected given their starting points and circumstances. This is particularly the case for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those who are potentially the most socially deprived. The great majority of pupils achieve the qualifications they need to move on to their chosen careers or to further education. The school, therefore, not only raises their aspirations, but provides most pupils with the tools to achieve them.

This success has been achieved through a culture that encourages high expectations of all pupils and that challenges the pupils themselves to work towards individual targets that will realise their potential, both academically and socially. This is not easy given the difficulties that face many of the pupils in their lives, and the challenges that some present to the school. All pupils are provided with a balanced curriculum, enriched by opportunities for spiritual reflection and extended study to stretch those that are particularly gifted and talented or need additional support.

One of the school's greatest strengths is its focus on ensuring that pupils develop personally and academically. The care, guidance and support it provides are outstanding. The school knows its pupils well, enabling them to be both nurtured and challenged in equal measure. Senior staff, leaders of the academic and pastoral care systems, and staff supporting pupils who are most at risk of disaffection or underachieving, work together closely. The systems that underpin this quality of support are complex, but highly effective. They work well because of the commitment and dedication of all those involved; they go the extra mile for their pupils. One parent summed up the view of many when commenting, 'This school has a very good attitude towards pupils' self-awareness and well-being. All staff relate well to pupils and with great

understanding and care. My daughter has not only improved academically but also matured into a sensible, well-adjusted young person.'

The successful ethos of the school, the effectiveness of its care and support systems, the culture of accountability that has developed, and the resulting improvements in the school's performance are the consequence of the outstanding leadership, vision and commitment of the headteacher and senior staff. The school is very well led and managed. The development of Specialist Language College status has helped to drive a number of initiatives and improvements across the school as a whole. The school provides good value for money.

The school continuously evaluates its performance. This has resulted in a number of intelligent and innovative strategies that have brought about improvement. The school knows that it needs to ensure that more pupils achieve the higher levels of attainment in Key Stage 3 and at GCSE and that boys in particular realise their potential. It has developed a range of strategies to enable this which have already brought about significant improvements in results in 2006. Its processes for monitoring, evaluating and managing the performance of staff have been strengthened over the last two years, also leading to improvements. However, the school is aware that the performance of some curriculum areas and middle managers is still not consistent enough and that the monitoring by senior staff now needs to establish consistent benchmarks for assessing teaching and learning. The improvements already achieved and the way that it has tackled areas for development over time demonstrate that the school is well placed to continue to improve.

### **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form** **Grade: 3**

The sixth form provides a satisfactory education for its students. There are currently limited alternatives in the local area. For many it is an opportunity to follow their chosen academic and vocational studies in an environment that maintains a Catholic ethos and values, and allows them to continue to develop in surroundings where they are known to staff and where they enjoy the same high standard of care and support as in the main school. Standards achieved are below average. GCE A level results improved significantly in 2005 and were broadly in line with the national average in terms of overall pass rates, but fell again in 2006. Nevertheless, most students make satisfactory progress and achieve their personal ambitions, moving on to their chosen employment, training or to higher education, often overcoming personal barriers and obstacles to do so. In the circumstances, students and parents feel that they have made the right choice. Students value the extra efforts that teachers make to ensure they understand the work and the close but challenging support and mentoring they receive. The school has reviewed the curriculum it provides and taken steps to rationalise the courses and provision to better meet the needs of those who choose to stay on.

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## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all staff clearly focus on those pupils who have the capability to achieve higher levels in national tests and examinations in order to further raise standards in Years 9 and 11 and in the sixth form.
- Reinforce the peer monitoring by senior staff to ensure that all middle managers are applying consistent standards in monitoring teaching and learning in their curriculum areas and departments.
- Identify the measures by which the school can evaluate fully the impact of its work in implementing the Every Child Matters agenda and its effect on further improving the outcomes for the children and young people.

## Achievement and standards

**Grade: 2**

In 2005 the standards attained by pupils in Year 9 were significantly above national averages in English and science and in line in mathematics. Results in 2006 indicate that standards are in line with those nationally, although the numbers of pupils achieving the higher levels remain generally below national averages. In 2006 half the pupils attained five or more A\* to C GCSEs, a significant improvement on previous years though this still remains below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\* to G grades at GCSE has been consistently well above average. This, along with the high expectations of entries for GCSEs and the very low numbers leaving with no passes, reflect the school's success in maximising the attainment of the great majority of its pupils.

Since 2002, the school has consistently been in the top 10% of schools nationally for the progress that pupils make, given their starting points when they enter the school. This is particularly the case for those pupils most at risk of underperforming. Results in 2006 show that the need to improve the achievement of boys and to ensure that more of the school's most able pupils reach their potential have been tackled quickly and effectively. The school has met or exceeded its targets in four of the last five years and this year has exceeded all its challenging achievement targets.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good. The school's support for their emotional well-being, and to help them understand how to keep themselves and others safe, is excellent. The pupils have a voice in decision-making through the school council and have actively contributed to the increased opportunities for sport and physical education and the adoption of healthier eating. The school's 'Education for Personal Relationships' programme has a strong focus on helping

the pupils to develop responsible attitudes to others, and to the wider community.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding and their cultural development is good. Parents are clear that behaviour in the school is good: bullying is rare and dealt with positively. Those pupils who spoke with inspectors were very clear that they feel safe within the school and, importantly, understand their responsibility for ensuring that others are safe. The school fulfils its responsibilities for safeguarding all children well. Pupils and parents alike are very conscious of all the school does to maximise the chance of future economic well-being for its pupils.

The school has recently made a decision to embed the Every Child Matters agenda more firmly into the curriculum. In fact, its current practice already delivers the expected outcomes for children and young people very well indeed. However, it is conscious that it needs to articulate more clearly how this interweaves into practice at every level, and to identify a wider range of ways to evaluate its impact.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

Senior management monitors the quality of teaching effectively and rigorously. As a result, the school judges that teaching in the main school is good and is satisfactory in the sixth form. The lessons observed during this inspection confirmed the school's assessments and, importantly, showed that where areas for improvement had been identified these had been acted upon. The previous inspection identified a need to encourage more independent learning by pupils. Pupils' individual learning styles are now assessed in Year 7 and they are taught thinking skills and a range of learning techniques in Years 7 and 8. Over the last two years the school has introduced and steadily embedded improvements to assessment. Teachers now monitor pupils' performance more accurately to ensure they are appropriately challenged. Every lesson seen set clear learning objectives and pupils were clear on their individual targets and the next level they needed to reach in each subject. The school is aware that it needs to ensure greater consistency in how teachers help pupils understand not just the competencies and skills they need to improve their performance against National Curriculum levels, but how these tie in with the day to day lessons and the work they are doing over time.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

The school provides a good curriculum for all its pupils, including those in the sixth form. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extension courses and opportunities, particularly for those who are identified as being gifted or talented in a range of subjects, or in specific subjects. The school has successfully introduced a range of 'pathways' in Key Stage 4 that enable pupils to study the mix of academic and vocational subjects that most meet their needs, including joint provision with local colleges and work-based training providers. This is having a significant impact on the performance of boys in particular.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

The care, guidance and support provided to pupils in the main school are outstanding; they are good in the sixth form. As one parent put it, staff 'strive to keep the school as a family'. The many strengths of this aspect of its work permeate the school, as they do this report, and are a key factor in its success.

Two aspects are particularly noteworthy and help to illustrate the bigger picture. The Emmaus Centre, a small unit within the school, provides supervised and very effective support for those pupils who are struggling with personal or social problems in their lives or in the general school environment. It operates an open door policy for pupils who need some respite. Pupils use this facility responsibly and continue their class work whilst there, supervised by specialist staff. The centre is very well integrated with the specialist support provided for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Where pupils' behaviour is not acceptable and the school is forced to take stronger measures, they are not excluded from the school but are withdrawn and supervised by senior staff or their personal mentors within the school. The message to pupils is clear: the school will not abdicate its responsibility to them and they cannot abdicate responsibility for their own actions and its effect on others.

The school uses its small team of learning mentors very well. They are well integrated into the pastoral systems and are able to contribute fully to the monitoring and overview of both the academic and personal development of pupils. Along with the school's personal development coordinator, they now liaise more closely with the Connexions service and have become the key source of more personalised careers advice and guidance. The results are evident in the success rates of pupils moving on to their chosen careers and are helping younger pupils in the school to realise that their own aspirations are achievable.

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## Leadership and management

**Grade: 1**

The school judged that the leadership and management of the school, including the sixth form, were good. This inspection shows that whilst it is good in the sixth form, the leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are outstanding. The school's vision and its core values, and its steady improvement, are the result of the tireless commitment of the headteacher and the contributions of the deputy headteachers. One of the school's great strengths is the collective responsibility and accountability that has developed across those senior and middle managers that lead the many strands of carefully integrated academic and pastoral support that enable so many pupils to succeed. A well structured performance management system for all staff is helping to ensure improvement in teaching and in the management of subject areas. The areas for development identified at the last inspection have all been addressed. The governing body contributes effectively to this collective effort.

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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

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

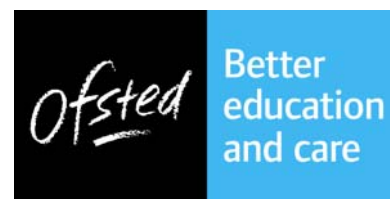
All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
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	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	3	
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	



St Chad's Catholic High School  
Grangeway  
Halton Lodge  
Runcorn  
Cheshire  
WA7 5HY

22 September 2006

Dear Pupils

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you the results of the inspection. We enjoyed meeting some of you and appreciated your comments and opinions during our visit. A very large number of your parents also completed a questionnaire to give us their views of the school. This was most helpful, so please pass on my thanks to them.

The inspection found that yours is a good school with a number of really outstanding features. These are some of the things we found most impressive.

- The leadership and management of the headteacher, senior staff and all those staff who are leading on the many things the school does to help you develop personally and socially.
- The care, guidance and support you receive to help you achieve your full potential. We agree with many of you, and your parents, that the teachers in the school 'go the extra mile' for you.
- The way the school has high expectations of you in the way you behave and in what you can achieve.
- The way that you play your part in this: you really do know what's expected of you and the targets you are set and most of you are achieving well.
- The way that the school is organising the courses that you can study to ensure that they best suit all your needs and the extra opportunities you get to develop your talents, or get the extra support you may need.

All of this adds up to an effective education for you.

There are some areas that the school recognises it needs to continue to develop.

- It needs to continue to concentrate of ensuring that all those of you who are capable of achieving the very highest grades are helped to do so.
- It also needs to keep trying to make sure that all curriculum areas are working equally well and the teaching you receive is the best it can be.

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- The school does an excellent job in helping you to be healthy and safe, to enjoy your education, to be responsible young people, to make a positive contribution to the school and the community, and in helping you to achieve all that you can to give you a start for the future. We have suggested that it needs to think about how it can measure how well it is doing this.

We are confident that the school will continue to improve. As now, you will be very important to ensuring that happens. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Terry Holland  
HMI