

# St Augustine's Catholic College

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 126495           |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Wiltshire        |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 293576           |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 21–22 March 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | James Sage HMI   |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Comprehensive                            |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Voluntary aided                          |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–18                                    |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed                                    |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 962                                      |
| 6th form                                  | 210                                      |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                       |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Jeremy Simmons                           |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Brendan Wall                             |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 12 February 2001                         |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Wingfield Road<br>Trowbridge<br>BA14 9EN |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01225 350001                             |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01225 350002                             |

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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 has been a specialist technology college since 1998 and in April 2006 added sports college status as a second specialism. There are slightly more girls than boys in Years 7-11 and significantly more girls in the sixth form. Students are drawn from a wide area and from a range of partner primary and junior schools. Standards on entry are above the national average and significantly above at the higher levels of attainment. The sixth form attracts students from a wide range of other schools over a wide area. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities and the proportion with statements of special educational needs are below the national average. The large majority of students are of White British ethnicity and the proportion where English is believed not to be their first language is well below the national average, although this is increasing.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The overall effectiveness of the school is outstanding. Senior leaders provide very clear direction and set high expectations for all aspects of the school. The senior leadership team and governing body know where improvement is required and have shown the ability to take highly appropriate actions. There is already good evidence of impact, for example, through steadily rising achievements since the previous inspection, and the school has excellent capacity for further improvement. Parents and students are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the school, which is careful to regularly survey and take full regard of their views about all aspects, including teaching and learning.

Standards are very high. Teaching is outstanding overall, and ensures that students achieve extremely well. Progress is consistently outstanding in Key Stage 3 but performance in a small number of subjects in Key Stage 4 does not reach the very high expectations set by the school as a consequence of weaknesses in middle leadership; this is particularly the case in the science subjects. The school is aware of this relative weakness as a result of its robust monitoring systems but the actions taken to resolve it have not yet been fully effective. It has instigated the use of coaching and mentoring to raise the quality of teaching even further.

The personal development of all students is outstanding. This arises from the high expectations, the excellent ethos of the school, the emphasis placed on Every Child Matters throughout the school, the matching of the curriculum to the needs of students extremely well and the very high levels of participation in the extensive range and variety of extra-curricular activities. A particularly strong feature is the inclusion of students' personal development in the frequent and rigorous departmental review and self-evaluation process.

All students are clear about their current level of achievement and their target levels or grades. The introduction of academic monitoring and progress days is having a positive impact in this respect. Heads of year provide strong leadership, resulting in outstanding care, guidance and support. Staff go to considerable lengths to provide individual support and guidance for students.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Standards in the sixth form are significantly above average with many students reaching very high levels in A-level examinations. Students join the sixth form with generally above average standards and, over the last three years, achievement has been good and in some subjects outstanding. Students do well because of good teaching and because the curriculum offers excellent opportunities and is extremely well suited to their needs. Particular care is taken to ensure that students from the school are catered for well in the sixth form. The personal development of all students is outstanding. Students receive excellent support and guidance, regardless of their background or aptitude. All teachers pay close attention to developing rounded and mature individuals and ensuring that all students participate fully in the life of the school.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Senior managers have high expectations and all aspects of the sixth form, including teaching and learning, are regularly evaluated and the lessons learned are incorporated into planned developments. However, improvement

planning is not sufficiently focused on raising students' achievement. Not all departments successfully set challenging targets for students that are based on careful analysis of data.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Strengthen leadership in science to improve achievement.
- Make better use of data in the sixth form to set challenging targets in some subject areas.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' achievements are outstanding. Students join the school with above average attainment and the school builds on these standards very effectively. The standards achieved in each key stage are very high. The proportion of students achieving five A\* to C grades at GCSE has been consistently well above the national average for many years. The proportion of students achieving A\* to C including English and mathematics is also well above average.

Students make outstanding progress from Year 7 to Year 9; this has risen steadily over the past three years. Progress in Years 9 to 11 is outstanding in many subjects and this also has improved over the past three years, but achievement in biology and chemistry is not as strong as in other subjects.

Achievement in the sixth form is good and the A-level pass rates show a steady improvement, even though numbers have increased with a much higher proportion of girls staying on.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The personal development of all students is outstanding. An extremely strong, thoughtful, caring ethos permeates the school and has a positive impact on standards. The spiritual dimension underpins the whole school and is integral to this ethos. Older students support younger ones well and provide exemplary role models. The students have a tremendous understanding of the needs of others, especially those with behaviour or emotional difficulties, and are keen for their peers to succeed. Many dimensions of cultural development are outstanding; for example, strong music and drama performance in school, and developing multicultural understanding through the curriculum and links with other schools. Many students, including those in the sixth form, make outstanding contributions to the school and to the wider community.

Exemplary behaviour throughout the school has a very positive impact on learning. Students really enjoy the school, their lessons and the extensive extra-curricular activities - "we have so many opportunities to express our talents"; "it's not the end grade you reach but the achievement of each individual". Attendance is good.

All students adopt safe practices. Although there is no evidence of any bullying, the school is not complacent and places an excellent focus on bullying through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. A 'bullying email address' is available for students to report any concerns. Students are very confident that adults will resolve issues. They adopt healthy lifestyles, enjoy the additional physical education provided and there are extremely high levels of participation in extra-curricular sports. The school is thoroughly deserving of its

Healthy Schools award. The development of students' future economic well-being is outstanding. This stems from the high standards of literacy and numeracy, working cooperatively with others, involvement in Business Enterprise, and through fundraising activities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The very large majority of teaching is consistently good and improving, and some is already outstanding. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this well in their planning and in providing clear explanations for students, often finding alternative ways of approaching a point to help those not clear the first time. Lessons are managed very well and all classrooms reflect a very purposeful environment. Students are enthusiastic about the quality of teaching they receive and fulsome in their praise of their teachers and the attention given to their individual needs. All students have a good understanding of their current levels of performance and their targets and what they need to do to make good overall progress but variations in the quality of the dialogue between teachers and students and in the use of formative marking mean that a small number of students are unclear about 'the next steps'.

Extensive work has taken place to support those students identified as gifted and talented and this is now being used to improve standards for all through, for example, the use of 'challenges' in all lessons, although the impact of this is variable. In the very large majority of lessons, very good attention is given to those students with learning difficulties and disabilities to ensure that they make excellent progress. This is particularly true for those in the 'Preparation for Work' group.

In the sixth form, the best teaching is effectively focused on supporting individual needs and is also challenging and exciting. Teachers demand and receive a high level of participation from students. Students are enthusiastic about learning and keen to do well. Occasionally, lessons are overly focused on the teacher talking or writing on the board and students are more passive; they pay attention and try hard, but make less progress because they are less involved.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school provides an exciting and stimulating curriculum. Students and parents demand a strong academic bias and the school provides this, along with opportunities of a more vocational nature where appropriate. The school ensures that all learners, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are challenged to do their best. Students are full of praise for the outstanding breadth and variety of extra-curricular activities and opportunities; for example, the wide range of sport, drama, music, and clubs such as technology and art. The school is justifiably proud of the students who do well in competition with their peers in other schools, for example, in Young Enterprise and Paperclip Physics.

In the sixth form, there is very good cooperation and links with other providers in the area. The school is constantly striving to improve its offerings and regularly seeks the opinions of students and their parents. One example is the involvement in a federation of local schools bidding for pathfinder status for 14-19 developments.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

#### Grade for sixth form: 1

Pastoral care in the school is outstanding. All appropriate child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place and students are very well supported by a range of extremely knowledgeable and caring staff. Every effort is put in place to support students with specific needs; vulnerable students are very appreciative of the outstanding levels of support - "the school support system is phenomenal", "I would be in real trouble now if not for this school". High quality support tailored to individual needs to build self-esteem has a very positive impact on standards.

The academic support for students is also outstanding. Students are aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve. They find the 'progress days', where tutors meet individual students with their parents or carers twice each year, very helpful and guide them well. Students who experience difficulties are supported well through extra tutoring.

In the sixth form, the tutor programme in particular is exemplary and students are fully involved in setting targets and monitoring their own progress. Extra time is given to both weaker students and those who are gifted or talented to enable them to achieve their potential.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

#### Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has led by faith and example and has developed a very clear vision for the school. This is widely shared and supported by the strong senior leadership team. The school has developed an effective devolved management structure that has given considerable responsibility to middle managers, who are supported well by the senior team. Under this structure, the majority have developed considerable skills and lead their departments most effectively, with the result that teaching and achievement have continued to improve. A small number of relative weaknesses in middle management have been identified, particularly in science. Improvement strategies have met with limited success and the school is now appropriately adopting a different approach.

Monitoring and evaluation processes are rigorous and robust. In most subjects, there is careful analysis of data to set challenging targets to raise students' achievement, although this is not always strong in the sixth form. Staff welcome responsibility at all levels and contribute fully to the many school activities. Governors provide very effective leadership and take the role of 'critical friend' very seriously.

The technology specialism has had a very positive impact on the school and on its work with partner schools. In particular, the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is exemplary. The more recent sports specialism is already having a positive effect upon students' overall development. A particularly interesting development is the links between sport and literacy to raise standards for a small group of identified students.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |              |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | <b>School Overall</b> | <b>16-19</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

### 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> | 1   | 2   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 1   | 1   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 1   | 1   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 1 | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 1 | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 | 2 |
| 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>                           | 1 | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 1 | 1 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 1 | 1 |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 1 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 1 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 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 | 1 | 1 |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 1 | 2 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 1 | 1 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 1 | 1 |

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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 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  | 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**

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your school recently and would like to thank you for all the help you gave us. We very much enjoyed talking to you and were impressed by the way you made us feel very welcome in your school.

We believe that St Augustine's is an outstanding school. The standards you reach are outstanding and, in the large majority of subjects, you make excellent progress. This is because teaching is excellent and you are fulsome in your praise of the attention teachers give to your individual needs and to keeping track of your progress. We were extremely impressed by your behaviour and the respect that you show for each other and for the adults working in the school. Your excellent behaviour means that everyone can play a full part in lessons.

The school provides you with an excellent curriculum that is very well suited to your needs and aspirations. The wide range and variety of other activities are extremely impressive and the large majority of you make full use of these opportunities. The quality of art, performing arts, sport and technology-based activities is something you can be very proud of. Similarly, your involvement in the wider community is excellent.

The school gives outstanding attention to your overall personal development. You feel safe and well cared for, and you are confident that there are adults you can go to with problems. The spirituality of the school permeates all aspects of school life and leads to an ethos where everyone is supported and valued highly. This is helped by the strong leadership of the headteacher and senior managers. The school takes great care to listen to your views and take full account of them.

The main priority for the school is to support a small number of subjects, especially in science and in the sixth form, to help them meet the very high expectations of the school.