

St Anselm's Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118918
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313148
Inspection dates	12–13 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Joan Greenfield

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1024
Sixth form	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Greg Watkin
Headteacher	Fiona Quilty
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Old Dover Road Canterbury CT1 3EN
Telephone number	01227 826200
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Anselm's is an average sized secondary school. It is a comprehensive school in a selective area and has fewer higher attaining students than is usually found in such schools. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Most students are from White British backgrounds, and the remainder come from a range of other backgrounds, the largest number from Eastern European countries. Very few students are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, but as the school is a designated resource base for students with physical disabilities, the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than average. The school is a specialist college for science.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides students with a satisfactory education. Some of the many initiatives that have been introduced in the past year have yet to have a significant impact on raising standards and achievement. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and in most respects their analysis is accurate. However, the large number of actions in the school improvement plan, along with the lack of measurable indicators to judge their success and clear timescales, make it difficult for senior staff and governors to evaluate their impact. The plan does not focus sufficiently on the few key areas that will improve standards and achievement substantially. In addition, the relative newness of the changes in the responsibilities of senior and middle leaders and some inconsistency in the way these responsibilities are carried out mean that the school's overall leadership and management and its capacity to improve are satisfactory.

Students' achievement is satisfactory in the main school and in the sixth form. Their attainment when they start school in Year 7 is slightly below average. Students make satisfactory progress between Year 7 and Year 11, as well as in the sixth form. Standards remain below average by the end of Year 11 and Year 13, but on some measures they are improving. The GCSE examination results at five or more A* to C grades have improved over the past three years. In 2008, there was a significant increase in the GCSE results at five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics, and a rise in the proportion of sixth form students gaining the higher A-level grades.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Although teachers plan their lessons in detail, the specific learning that is to be covered is not always identified clearly and the activities do not always meet the needs of all students in the class. As a result, some work is not demanding enough for the higher attainers, or fails to provide enough structured support for the lower attainers. The marking of work is inconsistent and does not always give students enough guidance on how they can improve it. The curriculum, which is satisfactory, provides students with an adequate range of academic courses and a few vocational ones. The curriculum is currently under review as the school rightly recognises that it does not fully meet the needs and aspirations of all students. Initiatives implemented as a result of the school's specialism are slowly improving provision in science and mathematics, but they have yet to have a significant impact across other subjects or the school as a whole.

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, as are the care, guidance and support they receive. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, enhanced by the school's ethos and values, is good. Most students enjoy school, although attendance remains below the national average, and relationships are good. The majority of students behave well, but a small minority do not and at times their behaviour affects the learning of others. Students' understanding of how to keep safe and their contribution to the school and wider community are good. They know how to keep healthy but do not always put this knowledge into practice. They develop a satisfactory range of skills to equip them for their future lives.

The school works well in partnership with other agencies, including local schools, to support students' well-being and extend their opportunities. However, the school's partnership with parents is not so strong. A large number of parents in their responses to the inspection questionnaire raised considerable concerns about many aspects of the school's provision. Amongst other matters, they expressed particular concerns about the quality of communication

between the school and parents, as well as questioning some of the changes that have been implemented. Many of these changes have been necessary to enable the school to raise standards further, but the rationale for them may not have been shared clearly enough with parents. Governors undertake their responsibilities satisfactorily. Together with the headteacher, they have much work to do to reassure the large number of parents who expressed in their written responses considerable concerns about the school's work and its future direction.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students receive a satisfactory education in the sixth form. Through the consortium arrangements with other schools, they have access to an extremely wide range of AS/A-level and vocational courses. As a result, the number of students taking such courses is increasing, and retention rates are improving. Students make satisfactory progress when account is taken of their starting points, although standards remain below average by the end of Year 13. This is reflected in the A-level results, which have been below average but are slowly improving. The results in 2008 were not quite as strong as those in 2007, but a greater proportion of students gained the higher grades.

Students like being in the sixth form, have good attitudes to their work and make a satisfactory contribution to the work and life of the school. Students value the support teachers give them but say that this varies according to the subject. For example, they comment that work is not always marked quickly enough, although they find the feedback they receive helpful. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some examples of good practice evident in some subjects. The assessment and tracking of students' progress are inconsistent and students recognise that they are capable of being challenged further by staff. The opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular activities are not as wide as in the main school, and the school recognises that provision in these areas has not been extended enough. Leadership of the sixth form has changed recently and overall it is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Identify the few key priorities that will have a significant impact on raising achievement and standards across the school.
- Identify clearer learning objectives in planning lessons and provide students with more demanding work that is matched effectively to their needs.
- Improve the quality and consistency of the marking of students' work, and give them more guidance on how they can improve it.
- Improve the communication with parents to ensure a shared understanding of the school's future direction.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' attainment when they enter Year 7 is slightly below average, especially in their mathematical skills. They make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, although it is more assured in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. By Year 11, standards are below

average overall, as shown by the school's results in the GCSE examinations for the past three years. There are signs, however, that standards are improving. For example, the results at five or more A* to C grades have improved since 2006. When English and mathematics are included, the results at five or more of these higher grades showed a significant improvement between 2007 and 2008, although remaining below the national average. In the sixth form, standards are below average but students make satisfactory progress when account is taken of their earlier performance in their GCSE examinations.

Considerable variations exist between the results in different subjects in GCSE examinations and in AS and A-level examinations, but the school is taking appropriate steps to reduce these differences. The school's strategies have been especially effective in raising standards in English for those students who may be capable of gaining a GCSE grade C but they have not yet had such a marked impact in mathematics or science. The school exceeded its specialist targets for three sciences but did not meet its other targets. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making similar progress to their classmates but the higher attaining students do not do as well as they might because the work does not always challenge them enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students are prepared well for life in multicultural Britain through a curriculum that emphasises respect and tolerance towards others. This is shown in the positive relationships evident throughout the school, especially given the increasing numbers of students learning English as an additional language. Many students are active in organising events, raising considerable sums of money for charities, and activities involving primary schools. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Students have a satisfactory understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and many students participate in the sports activities provided for them during the school day. Not all students make healthy choices at lunchtimes and too many girls in Year 11 do not participate regularly in physical education lessons.

Most students enjoy school, attend regularly and respond positively to good teaching. Attendance has improved over the past three years but remains below average because of the persistent absences of a small minority of students. Behaviour is satisfactory. Most students behave well in lessons, but a small minority disrupt the learning of others at times and do not behave as well as they might around the school. Students say they feel safe and know that staff will help them if they have any difficulties. Nevertheless, there are more incidents of bullying, including verbal and physical abuse, than usually found in a school of this type, and this is of concern to a minority of parents. Students have a satisfactory range of skills to prepare them for their future lives. Their basic skills are improving, and opportunities to take on responsibilities and develop leadership qualities complement their work experience and developing enterprise skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although there is some good and occasionally outstanding practice, most of the teaching is satisfactory. The planning of lessons is detailed and teachers share each lesson's objectives with their classes. Often, though, these objectives are focused more on the activities to be covered rather than on the precise learning that is intended. As a result, conclusions to lessons

do not focus sufficiently on checking what learning has taken place or enable students to reflect carefully on the skills and knowledge they have mastered during the lesson. Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in the quality of their explanations and in their responses to students' questions, often placing them within the context of students' experiences. Where learning is more effective, teachers use their skills well to ask probing questions to challenge and extend students' thinking further. In such instances, students respond well and make good progress.

Across the school, too many activities in lessons are overly dependent on the teacher's input or explanations, followed by writing or recording notes. As a result, students have insufficient opportunities to work actively with other students to test their ideas or extend their thinking. In addition, the planning of activities does not focus sufficiently on the differing needs of students within the class. As a result, not all sessions are mentally challenging for the higher attaining students or sufficiently well structured for the lower attainers. In general, teachers' expectations of what students are capable of achieving are not high enough to ensure that they all make consistently good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides most students with the opportunities to gain the qualifications they need for further and higher education and give them adequate prospects for employment. Although some additional Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and other courses have been introduced, the provision for vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 remains limited. This means that the current curriculum does not wholly meet the needs of some students as well as it might. The curriculum is undergoing considerable review, with the formulation of plans to broaden the range of courses, especially at Key Stage 4, and the introduction of different pathways leading to sixth form study. Other developments include strengthening the provision for work-related learning, enterprise education and citizenship, as well as the teaching of the programme of personal, social and health education, which is currently too dependent on the skills and commitment of individual teachers. The curriculum for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those considered vulnerable is satisfactory. Many students participate in and appreciate the range of clubs at lunchtime and after school, particularly sport. Educational visits, including local studies and residential visits, and other enrichment activities broaden students' experiences and contribute well to their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school promotes an ethos in which all students are valued. Relationships are positive and students with physical disabilities and others identified as vulnerable are included effectively in all the school's activities. Intervention programmes support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and are helping them to make faster progress. However, not all these students receive their entitlement to support, which concerns some of their parents. Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. Health and safety procedures are robust, such that some school trips have been rightly cancelled because the arrangements did not conform to the policies of the school or the local authority. Strategies to increase attendance and to reduce the number of persistent absences have met with some success, although attendance levels are still not up to national averages.

Students receive satisfactory guidance at points of transition, especially when they transfer from their primary schools and enter the sixth form. The school is revising its procedures to ensure that students receive more help in selecting their GCSE courses. The use of data to set challenging targets and the arrangements for tracking students' progress are satisfactory and improving. The directors of students' studies identify students who are in danger of underachieving and provide them with additional support. However, the systematic monitoring of all students across the ability range is not sufficiently robust. The marking of students' work is inconsistent as it varies in its quality and helpfulness. Some students' work has been unmarked for considerable periods of time and where it is done regularly, the marking does not always give students enough guidance on what they need to do to improve it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior leaders have a clear focus on raising standards further and ensuring that the school's provision meets students' needs more effectively. This has resulted in considerable revisions to the leadership structure within the school at both senior and middle leadership levels. These changes are recent and have yet to show their impact at all levels, especially for some middle leaders. The school's senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Senior leaders have implemented a large number of changes to improve aspects of the school's provision in the last year or so. Several of these have been successful, for example in raising standards in English. The school's improvement plan contains a considerable number of actions that have the capacity to improve its provision and students' achievements. However, it lacks a sharp focus on the most significant priorities that will make a difference, as well as clear timescales and measurable indicators of success to enable senior staff and governors to evaluate the success of these initiatives.

Systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of the school's work are becoming more robust but are not always consistently applied. The new faculty directors are developing their roles well, but not all of the directors of students' studies give sufficient priority to the systematic monitoring and tracking of students' performance. The school now uses more challenging targets, especially in relation to academic achievement, than hitherto, but progress towards reaching them is not yet good enough to raise standards substantially. Many aspects of the school's work, both within its own community and beyond, promote community cohesion well but the evaluation of their impact by senior leaders and the governors is only at an early stage. The governing body provides valuable support to the school and ensures that statutory requirements are met. However, its role in monitoring the school's work and holding senior leaders to account for what they do is not yet fully developed.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

16 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Anselm's Catholic School, Canterbury, CT1 3EN

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed our visit, especially our discussions with some of you and seeing you at work in lessons. This letter is to tell you our main findings. I hope that some of you will take the opportunity to read the full report.

The school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. The satisfactory teaching helps you make the expected progress during your time at school, both in the main school and in the sixth form. The standards you attain are below average but there are signs that these are improving. For example, more students last year gained five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics because of the additional support provided by the school. The signs are that the results this year may also improve. We think, though, that with more demanding work in lessons, some of you can do better than you currently do.

You tell us that you enjoy school. The school's strong ethos supports your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. You make an effective contribution to the school and local community and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Staff give you satisfactory care, support and guidance and you tell us that you value their support. Most of you behave well. However, some of you do not behave as well as you should or attend school regularly.

Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. We have asked them to do four things to improve the school and raise standards further.

- Focus on the key priorities that will have the greatest impact on raising your achievement and standards further.
- Ensure that teachers identify more clearly the learning that is to take place in lessons and give you work that is better matched to your individual needs.
- Mark your work consistently and ensure that the marking gives you more help on how to improve your work.
- Improve the communication with your parents to ensure that they understand the reasons for the changes that are happening in the school.

You can help by always working hard, attending regularly and behaving well. Yours faithfully

Mrs J Greenfield

Lead inspector