

# St Augustine of Canterbury RC High Specialist Humanities School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105741
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	336553
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25-26 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Moss 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	646
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Canon Eugene Dolan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Michael McGhee
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	September 2008
<b>School address</b>	Grange Avenue Oldham Lancashire OL8 4ED
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 6268146
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<b>Age group</b>	11-16
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at plans, policies, the school's data on pupils' progress, records relating to behaviour, support for pupils and lesson observations carried out by the school, the results of surveys carried out by the school of pupils' and parents' and carers' views, 136 parental questionnaires completed for the inspection, and questionnaires also completed for the inspection by pupils and staff.

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

- Pupils' progress, including how well the school identifies pupils at risk of underachieving and how effectively it intervenes to provide support
- The quality of teaching and learning, including how effectively teachers use information about pupils' progress to plan lessons and how well teachers provide feedback to pupils on how to improve
- The school's monitoring of its own performance, including how effectively it evaluates the quality of its work and how effectively it uses the information to bring about improvements in teaching and learning.

## Information about the school

St Augustine of Canterbury Roman Catholic High School is smaller than the average secondary school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average overall, but is as high as one quarter of the pupils in some year groups, and below average for those with statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well-above average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not, or is believed not to be English is also well-above average. Almost one quarter of the pupils is eligible for free school meals. The school has achieved the Eco Schools Bronze award. The school was given a notice to improve at the previous inspection 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**

**2**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. St Augustine of Canterbury Roman Catholic High School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has some good features, notably the range of subjects available for pupils to study, and the care, guidance and support provided, particularly to pupils needing additional support in order to achieve well. Standards of attainment at the school have historically been low, but the good progress now being made by pupils means that there has been a significant improvement since the last inspection. Attendance is satisfactory and most pupils behave well. A large majority of pupils enjoy their education. This is shown in the comments they made to inspectors and in surveys carried out by the school and for the inspection.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Most pupils say they learn a lot in lessons. There is, however, a wide range in the quality of teaching and learning. For example, the best practice in teachers' use of data and assessment seen during the inspection is not used consistently in all lessons. As a result, the tasks given to pupils are not always sufficiently stimulating or appropriately challenging and pupils are not always clear about what precisely they have done well or what specifically needs to be improved.

The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs and interests of the pupils. The wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities are very popular with the pupils and they participate in large numbers. The school makes good use of partnerships with a range of organisations to provide a broad range of opportunities for pupils, including some individually personalised programmes. These partnerships have been enhanced through the school's specialist status.

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils promote their learning well. Arrangements for the care of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are organised systematically, with clear points of contact for pupils, parents and carers, and external agencies. There is a well-conceived range of interventions for pupils needing additional support, from those at risk of exclusion, to pupils with English as an additional language. This support has been highly effective, for example in reducing the number of exclusions at the school and in ensuring that individual pupils with particular special educational needs and/or disabilities are able to receive their education in a mainstream setting.

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Improvement at the school since the last inspection has been rapid, with regard both to examination results achieved by the pupils and in the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher and senior leaders have established throughout the school a clear determination to improve and secured strong support from the staff and governors. Leaders and managers evaluate the work of the school critically and accurately, using information gathered through rigorous approaches to monitoring the school's work. The school responds well to support from and evaluation by external agencies. As a result, the school has good capacity to improve further. The impact of the school's specialist status in bringing about improvements within the school continues to be limited. Pupils are provided with many good opportunities to contribute to their school and local community, to which they respond well, but aspects of the school's duties to promote community cohesion have not been completed.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the quality of teaching further by
  - ensuring all lessons provide pupils with stimulating tasks and an appropriate level of challenge
  - ensuring more consistent use of the best practice apparent at the school in assessing pupils' progress during lessons in order to provide them with clear feedback on what specifically they have done well and how they can improve their work
- Complete the work to promote community cohesion by
  - undertaking a more rigorous analysis of the school's context in terms of religion, ethnicity, and the socio-economic dimension, at the local, national and global levels
  - drawing up action plans to enhance the school's work in these areas and evaluating the impact of that work
- Make more effective use of the benefits of specialist status to bring about further improvements in teaching and learning, including the use of good practice developed in the specialist subjects to bring about improvements throughout the school.

About 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**

Pupils are increasingly well-motivated towards learning and are now making good progress. There are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups of pupils at the school, regardless of background. School leaders have focussed closely on narrowing the gaps in attainment that exist between different groups. For example, in 2009 there were significant improvements in the attainment

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of White British pupils and pupils of Pakistani heritage. In 2009, pupils of Pakistani and Bangladeshi-heritage, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities exceeded the challenging targets set for them. A high proportion of pupils goes on to further education and training after Key Stage 4.

A large majority of pupils say they feel safe at school. The school fosters in the pupils a realistic understanding of risks and helps them to keep themselves safe. During the inspection, pupils listened intently to an outstanding assembly on how to stay safe from cyber-bullying that included advice on how to get support at school, for example from the two specially trained 'cyber mentors'. The results of parental and pupil surveys, and detailed records kept by the school reveal that behaviour is improving and instances of permanent exclusion are now rare. A large majority of parents and carers think that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively. Pupils from different groups relate well to each other in lessons. Instances of racial intolerance and action to deal with them are logged carefully and scrutinised frequently by the most senior staff. As a result, the number of such instances is declining markedly and is now very low. The school has basic policies in place to promote equalities, but the extent of action taken to do so by different departments varies.

More than half of the pupils take advantage of the meals offered in the school dining room. The take-up of sporting and physical activities is good. Pupils take part willingly in a variety of opportunities to contribute to their school community, most notably by volunteering to act as Student Ambassadors, but also, for example, as peer mentors, who run a regular drop-in session for other pupils who may need help. Pupils play an important part in shaping school policies, such as the school's policy on adults smoking and they were solely responsible for writing the school's anti-bullying standard 'Our Promise Against Bullying'. Pupils respond well to opportunities provided for their spiritual and moral development. For example, the whole school watched a film about the Holocaust made by Year 9 pupils. Many pupils participate in charitable activities, for example filling 90 shoeboxes with presents for less fortunate children last Christmas, and all the takings from tickets sold for a musical performance by the pupils, 'All That Dance', scheduled for the week of the inspection, were to be given to charity.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>

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

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<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

In the lessons seen during the inspection, pupils showed a desire to learn and behaved well when the teaching was planned carefully and focussed on what the school's assessment data revealed about their needs. These lessons provided all groups of pupils with appropriately challenging and stimulating work and resulted in equally good progress. In other lessons, teachers' planning lacked sufficient detail and did not use the assessment data available at the school effectively to plan for the needs of the pupils, resulting in lessons that lacked sufficient interest, challenge and pace. As a result, pupils' interest waned and their behaviour became increasingly less satisfactory. Pupils are generally well-informed about their targets, but are often less clear about what they need to do to improve their work and reach them. The quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work is varied and does not always provide pupils with clear advice on how to improve.

The curriculum provided by the school is increasingly flexible and includes a variety of opportunities to meet the needs and interests of the pupils, such as the new diplomas and opportunities to start qualifications at an earlier age. The increased range of options is contributing to pupils' increasingly positive attitudes towards education and training, as demonstrated by the extremely low number subsequently not in education, employment or training, and by significantly improved pass rates in examinations since the last inspection. Many pupils participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. There are many, good opportunities for pupils to learn about staying safe and living healthily in both different subjects across the curriculum and through themed activities, such as visits by theatre groups to look at issues of alcohol abuse.

Pupils settle happily into the school because of good arrangements for transition from other schools and induction into this one. There are effective arrangements for working with external agencies, such as local services for children and young people. Pupils receive good quality information, advice and guidance about future courses and careers opportunities. The school combines the care, guidance and support for pupils with its flexible curriculum and well-conceived range of intervention strategies to provide effective support for pupils at risk of disengaging from education. For example, last year several pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who were struggling with their academic studies were provided with additional

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support and alternative courses to study, with the result that all of them went onto further education or training. Most parents and carers agree that the school informs them about their children’s progress, but a small minority would like more help so that they can support their children’s learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have established a strong drive for improvement at the school, with an unequivocal focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, there have been important improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection that have contributed significantly to much improved examination results. Teaching styles have been enhanced through the development of opportunities for drama across the curriculum, but there has been little other effective use of the school’s specialist status to bring about improvements at the school.

The improvements at the school have been the result of systematic, rigorous and detailed monitoring and evaluation by the school, allied to effective professional development for teachers, and very good use of support from a range of external agencies. Other partnerships with, for example, colleges, voluntary organisations and local services for children and young people make an essential contribution both to the curriculum offered to pupils and the care, guidance and support they receive. The progress of different groups of pupils is monitored carefully, in order to narrow gaps in attainment and ensure equally good rates of progress. Most parents and carers are happy with their children’s experience at the school.

Governors demonstrate clear awareness of pupils’ performance in examinations. They are passionate in their support for the school and understand the challenges it faces. All regulations for safeguarding pupils are met. The school has achieved the national standard for financial management.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

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<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## **Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers are supportive of the school and a large majority are happy with their children's experience. The proportion of parents and carers who hold positive views of the school is increasing, providing further evidence of the improvements seen during the inspection. Most parents and carers think that their children enjoy their education, that their children are kept safe and that the teaching is good. A small minority of parents and carers think that the school does not do enough to help them support their children's learning and to help their children live a healthy lifestyle.



### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Augustine of Canterbury RC High Specialist Humanities 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 136 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 646 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	25	83	71	4	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	34	30	73	64	8	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	37	33	65	58	8	7	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	25	75	65	7	6	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	28	24	68	59	13	11	4	3
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	17	15	66	58	25	22	6	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	14	75	64	22	19	5	4
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)	32	27	63	53	13	11	4	3
The school meets my child’s particular needs	28	24	62	53	13	11	9	8
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	18	72	63	14	12	7	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	13	80	68	12	11	5	4
The school is led and managed effectively	15	13	82	70	13	11	5	4
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	29	26	63	56	12	11	8	7

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.



27<sup>th</sup> November 2009

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Augustine of Canterbury RC High A Specialist Humanities School, Oldham, OL8 4ED**

Thank you for talking to my colleagues and me and making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We spoke with you in lessons, around the school and in groups, looked at your work, read the results of questionnaires filled in by you and your parents/carers, and spoke with some of your teachers. Here is a summary of our main findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

- St Augustine of Canterbury Roman Catholic High School provides you with a satisfactory education. It does some things well, such as providing you with a wide range of courses, extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities, and ensuring that you receive good care, guidance and support.
- You make good progress from your starting points when you join the school. The results you have achieved have previously been very low, but in 2009 there were significant improvements.
- Your attendance is much improved and is now satisfactory.
- Your behaviour is good, but it becomes less so in lessons that you do not find interesting.
- Most of your parents and carers support the school and think it is doing a good job.
- The headteacher and the staff at the school have a good understanding of what needs to be done to make things even better.

The school has improved a lot since the last inspection and no longer needs the notice to improve it was given then. I have asked the headteacher and the staff to make further improvements, however, so that all lessons provide you all with a good level of challenge, and that teachers make sure you have a clear understanding of how well you are doing and what is needed to make your work better, so that you can make as much progress as possible. I have asked them also to complete some particular pieces of work that it has to do to make sure that all of the different groups at the school continue to get good opportunities to gain experience and understanding of your own community and others different to your own. In addition, I have asked them to find ways to make more use of the fact that the school is a specialist humanities school, to make further improvements. Many of you, I know, already make a very important contribution to the school and I am sure all of you will want to do everything you can to support the staff in making St Augustine's better still.

Yours faithfully

Clive Moss  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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