

St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School, Ashton-in-Makerfield

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106540
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	377421
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2012
Lead inspector	Ruth James HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Deacon John O'Brien
Headteacher	Mr Peter Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2007
School address	Rookery Avenue Ashton-in-Makerfield Wigan WN4 9PF
Telephone number	01942 728651
Fax number	01942 730035
Email address	office@arrowsmith.wigan.sch.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

Inspection team

Ruth James
Bimla Kumari
Liam Trippier
Michael McLachlan
Paul Edmondson

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 48 lessons and a similar number of teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors took account of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised documentation including the school development plan, self-evaluation materials and safeguarding documentation. An analysis of 766 questionnaires completed by parents and carers was also considered, together with questionnaires from students and from staff.

Information about the school

St Edmund Arrowsmith is larger than the average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most students are of White British heritage and the percentage who speak English as an additional language is very small. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average. The school has gained many awards such as the Artsmark Gold Award, Investors in People, Basic Skills Award, Eco Schools Green Flag Award, The FA Charter School Award, International Schools Award and the ICT Quality Mark. The school has achieved Healthy School status. The school exceeds the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4. The school is the leading partner in a collaborative with four other secondary schools, which has established the 'Western Skills Centre', to deliver elements of the vocational curriculum.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Standards attained by students by the end of Key Stage 4 are consistently high. Students achieve well and make good progress from their above average starting points.
- Behaviour is outstanding and students feel extremely safe at school. They show respect for adults and for each other and their highly conscientious attitudes to learning are an important factor in their achievement. Attendance is high reflecting students' enjoyment of school. Bullying is very rare and any that occurs is dealt with effectively. Systems for managing behaviour work well.
- Teaching is good overall. Teachers have high expectations and use interesting activities to develop and reinforce students' knowledge and understanding. Examples of outstanding teaching were seen, but the quality of teaching is not consistently good across all subjects.
- Leadership and management are good. Highly skilled leadership by the headteacher and senior team together with effective systems to monitor and evaluate the school's work ensure that a strong focus on raising achievement is maintained. The promotion of students' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding.
- A large majority of parents and carers are extremely positive about the school. Specific comments included several praising the good work of the school, but a number did raise concerns, for example, about aspects of communication between the school and parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure that it is consistently good or better and increase the proportion of outstanding lessons by:
 - ensuring that teaching meets the full range of abilities and individual needs in all lessons
 - ensuring there is a suitable balance between teacher exposition and students tasks and activities to enable students to make good or better progress in all lessons
 - improving the consistency of marking of students' work and the quality of feedback given
 - managing the time in all lessons skilfully so that the pace is rapid and time towards the end of lessons is used well.

- Further develop communication strategies with parents and carers, including the school's response to specific concerns.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 has consistently been high and achievement is good. Students enter the school with standards that are generally above the national average. They make good progress across a range of subjects and the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is consistently high. The proportion of students achieving the full English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is well above the national figure. Authoritative motivational teaching and the exemplary attitudes typically displayed by students in lessons result in learning and progress in lessons that are rarely less than good and in some instances outstanding. Within this highly positive overall picture there is variation in the progress made by students in different subjects. Most groups of students do extremely well in English, mathematics and humanities. In modern languages, progress has been slower. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers in many respects, but some underachieved in mathematics in 2011. The school has taken steps to address the few weaknesses, but the impact of recent actions has not yet been seen in outcomes. Parent and carers responses to questionnaires show that a very large majority agree that their children are making good progress.

Quality of teaching

Teachers have strong subject knowledge, high expectations and set high standards. Inspectors observed high levels of engagement and enjoyment as students worked with sustained interest. In the best lessons, teachers provide challenging and stimulating learning opportunities, well-matched to students' prior knowledge. Skilful directed questioning involves a wide range of students in classes, and open-ended questions elicit good quality responses enabling students to articulate their views and share ideas. Clear verbal feedback makes sure students know how well they are

doing. Literacy skills are promoted effectively and students have good opportunities to speak and listen in many lessons, as well as to record work in writing. Students are well motivated and have good relationships with their teachers which help to ensure that they persevere in the face of difficulty. In an outstanding Year 8 mathematics lesson, the teacher made very effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). Students worked out whether equations matched graphs and their understanding was checked through the display of 'true' or 'false' cards. Students rose to the challenge, doing many examples in a brief amount of time. The teacher skilfully used directed questions to explain the equation of a straight line graph, before setting a task where students worked together using equations to find the gradient and y intercept. No time was wasted, learning proceeded at a rapid pace and students' enjoyment was evident.

The size of year groups means that where students are grouped by ability for lessons there is typically a fairly narrow ability range and teaching usually meets most needs. Where groups include a wider range of abilities than is typical, teachers do not always plan with sufficient precision to meet the full range of needs. Nevertheless, students are almost invariably cooperative and willing to make an effort even when they find tasks difficult. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively in lessons.

While teaching in a large majority of lessons is good or better, in a small minority it is satisfactory. Where teaching is not as successful, teachers sometimes talk for too long and time is not always managed as well. For example, the final part of the lesson is sometimes rushed. Marking is variable in quality. Some is cursory and does not make clear how students could improve their work. A few parents commented that lessons are disrupted on occasion by poor behaviour. Inspectors observed no evidence of this in the lessons visited but students spoken to reported that it involves a tiny minority of students, that any disruption is minor, and that it is managed well by teachers.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is outstanding, exemplifying their strong social and moral development. Students display excellent attitudes to learning which make an important contribution to their achievement. They listen carefully, respond readily to questions and instructions, and tackle work set diligently and conscientiously. They cooperate well in group activities. Students are highly respectful towards each other and adults. They have an excellent knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a safe situation for themselves and others. The school's policies and strategies for dealing with any unacceptable behaviour are well understood with clear rewards and sanctions. Students' understanding of right and wrong is strong and almost all students are highly adept at managing their own behaviour. Around school there is a calm and orderly atmosphere even at busy times when narrow corridors are crowded. Students move purposefully between lessons so that little time is lost. Similarly, students behave sensibly and with consideration and respect in the dining room and in the school grounds. Exclusions related to unacceptable behaviour are very low and have declined year-on-year. Bullying is very rare and students reported that it is dealt with effectively. Attendance is high, because students enjoy school and are highly committed to their education. Students' questionnaire responses show

that a very large majority feel safe and agree that behaviour is good. The vast majority of parents reported that their children feel safe and behaviour is good.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides firm and authoritative leadership with a strong focus on raising achievement. Senior leaders model good practice and lead by example. They are highly ambitious and work strenuously to monitor and improve all aspects of the school's work, including teaching. Suitable systems are in place to achieve this, including departmental self-evaluation, and effective professional development through specific events and ongoing teaching and learning communities. There is a shared culture of continuous improvement. The governing body is capable, knowledgeable and supportive. Members are very well informed about all aspects of the school's work.

The curriculum is well organised with effective opportunities for students with different aptitudes and abilities, and further improvements are planned including additional vocational courses. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively. The establishment of a centre for vocational studies with other schools and the strong links with local colleges all contribute extremely well to preparing students for the next steps in their education and training. Examination results have been sustained at a high level for many years and show a broadly improving trend but with occasional variation. Strategies to boost the attainment of the most-able have been effective in raising the proportion achieving the very highest GCSE grades. These improvements are clear evidence of the school's capacity to improve. Arrangements for safeguarding meet government requirements and are effective.

The promotion of students' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. An excellent Year 11 assembly encouraged students to consider the meaning of a parable and how it might influence their approach to their studies in their final school year. Students' understanding of other faiths and cultures is not as strong. Despite the school's well-established arrangements to keep parents and carers informed, the responses to the questionnaires demonstrate that a few parents and carers do have concerns about aspects of communication between school and home.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan, WN4 9PF

We would like to thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We found that your school provides you with a good education. We were extremely impressed by your excellent behaviour in lessons and around school and by your extremely positive attitudes to learning. We were pleased to hear that you feel safe in school.

Examination results for your school are consistently very good. You make good progress and attain high standards by the time you leave. Teaching is good and teachers work hard to ensure that your lessons are interesting and enjoyable so that you learn well. You are extremely conscientious and persevere even when you find work challenging.

The headteacher, senior leaders and staff have a good overview of the work of the school and constantly strive to bring about improvements. We have asked them to make all teaching as good as the best by making sure that all lessons meet the full range of abilities, the balance between teachers talking and student activities is most effective, all time is used well and marking consistently provides advice about improving your work. A few parents and carers commented on communication with the school and we have asked staff to consider how this might be improved.

We are confident that you will continue to work hard to achieve your best and we wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.