

Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College

Inspection report

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Contents

Background information	3
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement	6
Key strengths and areas for improvement	7
Main findings	8

Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College is the only Catholic sixth form college in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. The college was established in 1989, under the trusteeship of the Catholic Diocese of Leeds, and occupies a site close to the centre of Leeds. The college focuses on providing full-time courses for students from the Catholic 11 to 16 schools in central Leeds, but also recruits substantial numbers of students from other Catholic and other local schools in the surrounding area. Applications from Catholic students are rising and students from other faith backgrounds are strongly represented in the college. The majority of students come from Leeds, 29% are from black and minority ethnic groups, which is a much higher percentage than that for the local area, and nearly half come from areas of high deprivation.
2. The college has grown steadily since its creation and at the time of the inspection there were 1,422 students on roll with all but eight aged 16 to 18. The main curriculum provision is at level 3 and almost all students are on full-time courses. There has been some recent expansion of provision at levels 1 and 2. Student numbers are highest in science and mathematics, business, humanities, and social sciences.
3. The college's mission is 'Building a Community on Faith and Trust'.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Outstanding: Contributory Grade 1</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

4. Notre Dame is an outstanding college. There is a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement in all areas. Students feel safe and happy in college and are motivated to do well. The mission and ethos that were acknowledged as strengths in the last inspection are being maintained in support of young people from an increasingly wider range of cultural and social backgrounds. Achievement and standards are good. The progress made by the majority of students is very good and there is a continuing upward trend in high success rates. There are now only a few AS courses where success rates are a focus for improvement.
5. Teaching and learning are good and meet the needs of individuals very effectively. Good practice is shared well and there is an increasing use of information and learning technology (ILT). Support for students is outstanding. The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding. A wide variety of opportunities are used to encourage, respect and value different cultures and promote a socially inclusive environment. The college's provision for meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding and supports the very inclusive ethos of the college.
6. Leadership and management are excellent. All staff know their areas very well and work effectively to maintain strengths and improve any weaknesses. Targets are very well used to support progress and an upward trend in all areas can be seen. College developments place the student at the centre and strategies are integrated to ensure the greatest possible benefit; for example, the Every Child Matters themes are embedded well through all areas of provision.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

7. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. The self-assessment process has been refined over the last few years and is now highly effective and used very well throughout the college. The self-assessment report is accurate. Any difference in grading between the report and the inspection relate to the progress the college has made since the completion of the report. Quality assurance processes are excellent. There is a sharp focus on identifying areas for improvement and putting effective strategies in place to quickly address them. These strategies are thoroughly monitored and can be shown to lead to significant improvements. There is an upward trend in success rates at all levels. Targets are clear and embedded in a culture of high aspirations. Management information is used widely to monitor and evaluate progress and staff development is used to support improvement priorities at college, departmental and individual levels.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

8. Good progress has been made in improving the areas identified for development at the last inspection. Good practice is now shared using a wide range of means, both formal and informal, such as training days, twilight sessions and bazaars. The college is part way through a major building programme and, although there is still some way to go, significant improvements have been made. The curriculum offer has been developed in consultation with partners and meets the needs of students very well. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) has been a high priority for the college and is being developed well.

Key strengths

- very good progress made by the majority of students
- much good teaching and learning
- excellent social and educational inclusion
- outstanding support for students
- very productive quality improvement strategies
- highly effective leadership and management at all levels
- outstanding achievement of Catholic mission and ethos.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- success rates on a minority of AS courses
- further development of the accommodation strategy
- the embedding of the newly developed electronic monitoring of student progress across all areas.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

9. Inspectors agree with the college's judgement in the self-assessment report that achievement and standards are good. There has been an improving trend at level 3, where there are most students, and success rates are now broadly in line with national rates for sixth form colleges overall and for A and AS levels. The college is more inclusive than many of these colleges. Retention is high and improving and is above national rates. Pass rates on most courses are at or above national rates. Success rates on a minority of AS courses are low. Well thought out strategies have been put in place to address identified issues at AS level and these are already showing signs of positive impact.
10. On A level provision almost all students make very good progress when compared to their starting point, and have done so for a number of years. On AS provision the majority of students make very good progress and there is an improving trend over the last few years. There are no courses with a continuing trend of underperformance. At level 2 there has been an upward trend in success rates and at level 1 success rates have been maintained at a very high level for the last two years. Students produce work of a high standard and their attendance is excellent. They enjoy their life at college and take a very active role in the college and broader community.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

11. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The self-assessment report correctly grades the quality of teaching and learning and clearly identifies areas for improvement, which managers are working hard to address. Lessons are well structured with a clear emphasis on ensuring that all students make good progress. During lessons teachers check understanding regularly, primarily through question and answer, and written worksheets. They encourage high aspirations and students are fully engaged and motivated to achieve. Analysis by college managers indicates that a high proportion of teaching and learning is consistently good or better. The lesson observation system has been improved and is rigorous and well understood by staff. Teachers receive detailed, constructively critical feedback which they value. A range of opportunities have been developed to enable identified good practice to be shared with all teachers and to support the development of their skills.
12. Assessment is thorough and well planned. Learners' progress is well monitored in most areas; however, the new electronic system needs to be better embedded in some areas. Teaching and learning bursaries have encouraged staff to pilot ideas to improve the overall learning experience of students. The peer lesson observation system has been extended. Improvements have been made in the use of ILT to enrich learning. Classroom accommodation is satisfactory and investment has been made in ILT to improve learning environments.

13. The college's provision for meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding. The college has a clear view of the needs and interests of learners within the local community and has designed a curriculum which supports the college's commitment to inclusion very effectively. Students are provided with good subject choice and progression opportunities. The college offers a range of programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3 with a choice of 14 GCSEs and around 36 AS/A2 subjects. In addition to their main programme of study, many students undertake additional subjects or activities and all students have the opportunity to achieve a qualification in ICT. The college has been successful at attracting learners for under-represented groups. It is very responsive to local needs, meets employers needs well, and has developed good strategic links with a range of local secondary schools, with college and schools staff developing courses to provide good progression opportunities for pupils. The college, in response to meeting the needs of young people from Catholic partner schools, introduced courses at levels 1 and 2. Student numbers on these courses have steadily increased. The college is over subscribed; however, entry to the college is based on student needs rather than solely on educational achievement.
14. Enrichment opportunities for learners are excellent and take up is very good; for example, high numbers of students are working towards the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The enhancement programme is well planned and gives learners very good opportunities to access the variety of activities available. The college is responsive to learners' interest and responds well to learner feedback. Learners have good opportunities to access work experience as part of their enhancement programme.
15. Support for students is outstanding. Advice and guidance for students wishing to progress to higher education (HE) are excellent with an extensive programme to support HE application and career planning. Additional learning support is appropriate to students' needs, is well managed and sensitively arranged to encourage maximum take up. Support is presented as an entitlement that is available to all students whether for high achievers or for those in need of support for literacy, numeracy and study skills.
16. Tutors and learning support staff are vigilant in recognising learning support needs and identifying early signs of students' problems. Students value the contribution of their learning support teachers and speak confidently of the improvements they have made in their courses as a result of additional support. They are particularly appreciative of the inclusive nature of learning support, which eliminates a sense of being segregated.
17. A strong tutorial programme effectively monitors students' progress on a daily basis. There are regular reviews; targets are set and progress evaluated. Communications within the college are excellent. Briefing notes are centrally provided to ensure consistent accuracy of information. Tutorials are well organised and include prayer and opportunity for students' own presentations. The tutorial programme links closely with the assembly cycle.
18. The full-time chaplain is widely recognised as a strong and supportive figure around the college for support of individuals privately and for leading groups in

prayer and many charitable activities for good causes both locally and in the Third World. Assemblies provide the opportunity for the college's public act of worship as required by law and have been reviewed and made more appropriate to students' needs and interests. There is now a full cycle of interesting and thought-provoking presentations, often with the aid of outside speakers. A recent assembly, organised and presented by students, included a celebration of the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi as well as Christian prayer and information about community work with disadvantaged children.

19. All students are enrolled on the general religious education programme, philosophy, theology and ethics, which is an accredited course. Advanced GCE religious studies AS and A2 provide students with the opportunity for a more academic study of aspects of spirituality and morality.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: Grade 1

20. Leadership and management are outstanding. The governors, principal and senior management team are committed to the mission of the college. Strategic planning focuses on meeting the needs of the Catholic community and making a strong contribution to the well-being of the wider local community. The restructuring at senior level has led to clear lines of accountability and a firm focus on quality improvement. Leaders and managers at all levels are fully aware of their responsibilities and are highly effective.
21. Quality assurance systems are rigorous with any areas for improvement quickly identified and acted upon. The positive impact of improvement strategies can be seen in many areas, such as the improved teaching and learning observation system and the upward trend in student achievement. There are no departments with a continuing trend of underperformance and many outstanding areas. Self-assessment is a continual process with very effective monitoring, review and use of management information.
22. There is good professional development to support all staff. ILT resources have been improved to support teaching and learning. A very welcoming atmosphere in the college supports learners in settling quickly to their studies. The college is part way through a major building programme and accommodation has been improved in a number of areas with plans for further development. College finances are strong and the college provides good value for money. Governors have a clear view of the college and carry out their duties effectively.
23. Equality of opportunity is outstanding. It is fundamental to the ethos of the college and embedded in all areas of college life. College data is closely monitored by gender and ethnic background to identify any potential issues or barriers to learning. Promotion of equality of opportunity is very strong and respect for individuals pervades all aspects of the college. The college's response to recent legislation, including equality relating to race and disability, and to child protection is very good.

24. Relationships with Catholic partner schools are excellent and the college has a strong involvement in the diocesan council for education. Governors support the significant investment in the appointment of key personnel to the religious education department and to the chaplaincy. Good opportunities are provided in the college calendar for recognising and celebrating significant spiritual events in the liturgical and academic year.

Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	04/05	4	50	64	-14	...	...	...	...
	05/06	169	91	71	20	...	...	...	...
	06/07	130	88						
GNVQs	04/05	4	50	71	-21	...	...	...	...
	05/06	3	67	79	-12	...	...	...	...
	06/07	12	100						
NVQs	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	166	91	71	20	...	...	...	...
	06/07	116	87						

* college data

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

		16-18				19+			
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	04/05	848	71	73	-2	...	...	...	...
	05/06	784	75	78	-3	...	...	...	...
	06/07	745	81			1	100		
GCSEs	04/05	541	78	78	0	...	...	...	...
	05/06	346	80	82	-2	...	...	...	...
	06/07	347				1	100		
GNVQs	04/05	19	89	74	15	...	...	...	...
	05/06	29	93	77	16	...	...	...	...
	06/07	26	85						
NVQs	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other	04/05	288	56	62	-6	...	...	...	...
	05/06	409	69	70	-1	...	...	...	...
	06/07	372	76						

* college data

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts - Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	04/05	5,898	83	82	1	41	80	59	21
	05/06	6,302	84	83	1	10	70	65	5
	06/07	6,254	87			38	76		
A/A2 Levels	04/05	1,635	90	92	-2	14	93	76	17
	05/06	1,746	89	93	-4	7	57	78	-21
	06/07	1,879	92			16	88		
AS Levels	04/05	2,949	75	78	-3	16	56	54	2
	05/06	3,146	77	79	-2	...	...	...	...
	06/07	2,891	79			10	40		
GNVQs	04/05	220	85	74	11	5	100	...	...
	05/06	80	100	74	26	1	100	...	...
	06/07	...	...				
NVQs	04/05	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	05/06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	06/07	...	...				
Other	04/05	1,094	95	72	23	6	100	56	44
	05/06	1,330	92	75	17	2	100	62	38
	06/07	1,474	94			12	92		

* college data

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