

Thornleigh Salesian College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105264
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	377214
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Shirley Gornall 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,625
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Corrigan
Headteacher	Alison Burrowes
Date of previous school inspection	06 October 2008
School address	Sharples Park Astley Bridge Bolton BL1 6PQ
Telephone number	01204 301351
Fax number	01204 595351
Email address	contact@thornleigh.bolton.sch.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 rates 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

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 55 lessons, taught by 54 teachers, and held meetings with students, staff, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors considered the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of meetings, monitoring records, policies including those relating to safeguarding, and examples of students' work. They analysed 326 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 148 from students and 55 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection, in all subjects and especially in mathematics.
- The effectiveness of the school's provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The consistency of leaders at all levels in securing school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is under the trusteeship of Salesian of Don Bosco and is much larger than the average-sized secondary school. Most students are of White British heritage, although the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is rising and is now broadly average, as is the proportion that speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average, however, an average proportion have a statement of special educational needs. The sixth form admits students from other Catholic high schools and local secondary schools. The school was redesignated as a specialist sports college in 2008 and holds several awards including Investor in People, Fair Trade School, Cultural Diversity Award (gold), International Schools Award, Leading Parent Partnerships Award and Healthy Schools status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Thornleigh Salesian College is a good and improving school whose Catholic ethos underpins its work as an inclusive and tolerant community in which all individuals are respected, nurtured and challenged to do their best. Tenacious and dynamic leadership from the headteacher has secured strong improvement in provision and outcomes since the previous inspection. Students recognise and appreciate well-considered changes to teaching and the curriculum, which are securing their good progress and personal development. They are proud of their school, feel extremely safe within it, behave well and enjoy the increasing range of opportunities they have to shape its ways of working. Staffing has been strengthened and stabilised following a period of turbulence and there is a palpable sense of ambition and energy throughout the school community.

Attainment at GCSE level has risen and is above the national average. Students make good progress from broadly average starting points. Their results in mathematics have improved significantly and sustainably as a result of determined action to improve the quality of teaching. Students achieve well in a range of subjects, including those related to the school's physical education specialism. Attendance has risen and is above average.

The quality of teaching is good overall, with some that is satisfactory and an increasing proportion that is outstanding. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and most lessons are stimulating and enjoyable. On some occasions, however, teachers talk too much and do not give sufficient opportunity for students to apply their skills in active and varied ways. Teachers have good-quality information relating to the abilities of the students they teach and many, but not all, use this confidently to adapt their teaching to meet individuals' needs. There is some inconsistency in how well teachers adjust their lessons in response to students' understanding. The use of homework to extend and consolidate students' learning is uneven across the school. Outstanding care, guidance and support, including that provided through partnership with a wide variety of agencies, contribute greatly to students' self-esteem, inclusion, enjoyment and good progress.

Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress overall and those who enter with high attainment achieve particularly well. They display a strong commitment to the school and benefit from a widening curriculum and improving teaching. A new

leader has been appointed who has begun to implement carefully considered changes, but the full impact of these is not yet evident.

The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have established and articulated a strong vision that drives principled decision-making. They have taken brave and difficult decisions to secure rapid improvement while maintaining the school's compassionate and caring ethos. Middle leaders have welcomed training and coaching that has enabled them to take an active role in the school's development. There is some inconsistency in the effectiveness with which they share good practice within their departments and develop the skills of their staff. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, objective and based on robust evidence. Leaders are clear about the school's priorities and how these are to be addressed. Their track record of securing improvement is strong and this, combined with a staff whose morale is high, supportive parents and carers, and clear management systems mean that there is good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good and outstanding throughout the school by:
 - sharing the excellent practice that exists, within and across departments, to encourage students' active learning
 - ensuring that all teachers meet the differing needs of students within their classes consistently
 - ensuring that homework is used to consolidate and enhance students' learning.
- Improve the leadership of teaching by enabling subject leaders to develop and evaluate the practice of other teachers.
- Accelerate students' progress and raise attainment in the sixth form through the consistent implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the school's recently introduced policies.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enjoy school life and achieve well in relation to their starting points. The proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE qualifications at A* to C grades is significantly higher than that found nationally, as is the proportion gaining two good science qualifications. Attainment in physical education, the school's specialism, is consistently high. Many more students attain good grades in GCSE mathematics than at the time of the previous inspection and the proportion achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has risen strongly to be above average. Students report that they enjoy learning, especially when they are challenged to work creatively and collaboratively. School data and lesson observations confirm that most students make good progress in lessons and that there is little variation in the rate of progress made by students with different levels

of prior attainment. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, particularly when teachers adjust tasks to make them fully accessible.

Students behave well in lessons and around the school site. They are sociable, courteous and keen to discuss their ideas. They report confidently that incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with swiftly and effectively. Their understanding and respect for the school's approach to restorative justice is mature. Students feel exceptionally safe in school due to their strong trust in all staff, the school's approach to promoting internet safety and the effectiveness with which the extensive site has been made secure. During their time at Thornleigh, students develop attitudes and skills that equip them well for the world of work or continuing education. Their attendance levels are high and very few students are persistently absent. Virtually no students leave school without a place in education, training or employment. Students take on a variety of roles within their community, including as sports leaders and prefects. The recently formed school council has taken decisions that influence the running of the school.

Students have a strong understanding of their own faith and developing awareness of other belief systems. Their understanding of cultural diversity is promoted through the school's international links and developed in arts subjects, religious studies and humanities. Students engage readily in discussions about moral issues, showing sensitivity to each other's viewpoints.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good overall, with some that is satisfactory and an increasing amount that is outstanding. Relationships between staff and students are very positive. The best lessons are characterised by lively, engaging teaching which challenges students to extend and apply their thinking. For example, in a highly effective mathematics lesson, students worked collaboratively to explore and categorise algebraic equations. Their understanding was enhanced significantly

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

through peer discussion. In another outstanding mathematics lesson, Year 7 students extended their understanding of the properties of quadrilaterals in response to varied, fast-paced activities that required them to work in teams, refine their ideas and regularly evaluate their own progress. In an outstanding English lesson, students’ oral skills were promoted successfully through clear modelling by the teacher who then adjusted reading tasks for individual students depending on their answers to her questions. Their progress was enhanced because of the teacher’s clear recognition and response to their particular needs. However, in some lessons teachers tend to talk too much and learning becomes passive, with limited opportunities for students to discuss their ideas or learn in different ways. The school’s approach to lesson planning has been strengthened, but there is some inconsistency in how teachers adjust their plans depending on students’ responses. There is good practice with regard to homework setting in design and technology, but across the school, there is variability in the use of homework to extend students’ thinking and embed learning.

Most students know their targets and understand the next steps towards achieving them. There is particularly effective practice in physical education and mathematics with regard to assessment during lessons. Across the school, teachers’ marking is generally regular, helpful and constructive, although students’ errors in basic spelling and sentence construction sometimes persist unchecked. The curriculum is broad, balanced and has some particularly strong features, including the creative curriculum in Key Stage 3 and a broadening of ‘pathways’ at Key Stage 4 enabling students to pursue an enhanced range of courses. The school’s extensive extra-curricular programme is supported enthusiastically by teachers and students.

Excellent care, guidance and support are regarded as the entitlement of all students and are valued greatly by them and their families. The pastoral system is highly effective and enables students to be integrated swiftly into the school at whatever point they join it. Prefects complement form tutors by providing support during tutorial sessions for younger students. There is a consistent focus throughout the school on equipping students with the skills to ‘be their best’ as community members who care actively for each other. The school works hard to remove barriers to learning at an individual level. Students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable receive timely, multi-agency support to meet their needs, the impact of which is seen in improved attendance and outcomes.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher communicates a clear vision for the school’s development and has secured the support of the school community in striving for excellence. She and the senior leaders form a strong, committed and ambitious team who regard no obstacle

as insurmountable. Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken brave and difficult decisions in order to improve outcomes. Their self-evaluation is insightful and based on wide-ranging evidence. They recognise the school’s strengths and areas for development and involve partners, including the local authority and other schools, in enhancing provision.

Departmental leaders have benefited from training to help them manage their areas of responsibility. There is greater consistency than reported in the previous inspection. Collaborative work across departments, including between mathematics and English, has resulted in improved teaching and learning. School improvement over the last three years has largely been directed by senior leaders and the challenge now is for middle leaders to take a more direct role in evaluating the work of their colleagues and helping them to develop their skills. The governing body provides good support and rigorous challenge to the school. All statutory duties are met and policies are reviewed regularly and systematically. The governing body is increasingly outward-facing and evaluates its own effectiveness objectively. The school’s safeguarding procedures are comprehensive and meet requirements. Its arrangements for child protection are excellent. The security of the school site has been enhanced through installing perimeter fencing.

The school has a good understanding of the context of its own community and through a variety of activities has built harmonious and productive relationships within the locality and internationally. Students maintain that equality of opportunity is promoted at all levels and that harassment in any form is not tolerated. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of students. The school has addressed the weaknesses identified at its previous inspection successfully and demonstrates good capacity to sustain improvement.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students in the sixth form make broadly average progress from their starting points, although progress is better for those entering with high attainment at GCSE level. Students display positive attitudes to learning, both in their independent study and in lessons. Their attendance is improving and the proportion of students completing the

courses on which they embark is rising. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and inspectors observed good practice in English, Latin, history and psychology, where teachers’ questioning was targeted well to assess students’ understanding and to challenge them further. The sixth-form curriculum is improving, with the introduction of new courses that meet the needs and interests of a broader range of students better. The recently appointed sixth-form leader is committed and enthusiastic. There is a renewed focus on improving students' outcomes, although many systems are relatively newly established and their impact is not fully evident. Systems for monitoring and evaluating outcomes and provision in the sixth form are under-developed in comparison with the main school.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who completed questionnaires was higher than average. The large majority of those who responded say that they are happy with their children’s experience at school. They feel that the school is well led, keeps their children safe and equips them well for their next stage in education. One commented ‘I really appreciate the care staff have taken in helping my child to gain confidence and make progress.’ That view was echoed by other parents and carers. A very small minority feels that the school does not take account of their concerns. Inspectors took particular note of that view in considering the school’s systems for consulting and communicating with parents and carers. They found that the headteacher had developed a number of different channels of communication with parents and carers and that there had been consultation over key issues, such as the adjustment of the school day. A few parents and carers expressed concern about the quality and frequency of homework their children receive. Inspectors discussed homework with students and senior leaders. They concluded that there is variability in the amount of homework received by different groups and in its effectiveness in consolidating and extending learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornleigh Salesian College 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 326 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,625 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	139	43	171	52	9	3	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	165	51	148	45	10	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	136	42	157	48	15	5	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	116	36	166	51	23	7	7	2
The teaching is good at this school	117	36	179	55	15	5	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	100	31	172	53	29	9	7	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	91	28	191	59	28	9	1	0
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)	125	38	161	49	10	3	6	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	108	33	184	56	14	4	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	113	35	160	49	22	7	8	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	78	24	177	54	26	8	13	4
The school is led and managed effectively	153	47	143	44	12	4	6	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	146	45	148	45	17	5	6	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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

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.



22 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Thornleigh Salesian College, Bolton, BL1 6PQ

Thank you for the very warm and courteous welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Thank you to those of you who gave up your time to speak to us and those who completed the questionnaire. We agree with you that your school keeps you very safe, that the teaching you receive is good, and that the school is well led and managed. Many of you willingly take on extra responsibilities and make a valuable contribution, through your good behaviour and responsible attitudes, to the positive way in which the school is regarded by the local community.

The inspection team considers Thornleigh Salesian College to be a good school. It provides you with a good standard of education and most of you make good progress and achieve well. Aspects of the school's work are outstanding, including the care, guidance and support staff provide for you.

During the inspection, we held discussions with leaders, teachers, governors and yourselves about how the school can improve further. We have asked your teachers to increase the amount of good and outstanding lessons. In some lessons, we saw that you made outstanding progress in response to activities that challenged you to work together, explore ideas and solve problems. On other occasions, you were more passive and your progress slowed. Your teachers, already, work extremely hard. You can help them make lessons even better by letting them know what helps you to think and learn best. We have also asked the school to set good-quality homework for you in a more consistent way.

Inspectors have asked the school to consider how standards achieved in the sixth form can be raised further. We saw several examples of positive changes that have been introduced recently in the sixth form and we have confidence that these will support its future development.

Please continue to support your school as proudly as you do. On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Shirley Gornall
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.