

Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic College

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 123598 |
| Local Authority | Telford and Wrekin |
| Inspection number | 359476 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 January 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Kevin Sheldrick 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 | 11–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 665 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 67 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mark Anderson |
| Headteacher | Robert Hall |
| Date of previous school inspection | 25 November 2009 |
| School address | Whitchurch Road Wellington, Telford TF1 3DY |
| Telephone number | 01952 386100 |
| Fax number | 01952 417501 |
| Email address | brj.admin@taw.org.uk |

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 32 lessons, taught by 32 teachers, and held meetings with a representative of the governing body, staff and groups of students. They observed the college's work and looked at documentation relating to planning, monitoring, safeguarding, communications with parents and carers, and questionnaires from 66 parents and 79 students.

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

- The extent to which students are making better progress, particularly boys, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who whom English is an additional language.
- The extent to which students in the sixth form are making better progress than at the time of the last inspection and what this indicates about the college's capacity for sustained improvement.
- How effectively the college uses assessment information related to all outcomes.
- How effectively the college is promoting equal opportunities and community cohesion and what this indicates about the college's capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

This college is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The college has about the national average of students known to be eligible for free school meals. About half of students are not members of the Catholic faith and they include members of other Christian denominations, and a small minority from other faiths.

Students travel to the college from all over Telford and Wrekin, and beyond, because this is the only Catholic college in the area. The proportion of students from ethnic minority groups is close to the national average, as is the proportion for whom English is an additional language.

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

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 15 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. This college provides a welcome to students of all backgrounds and faiths. One member of staff captured the views of many in describing the college as being 'like part of a family'. The college is a cohesive and harmonious community. The gospel values are very effectively promoted and high quality care is also provided. These strengths explain why many of the personal development outcomes are good.

The college has improved the effectiveness of teaching and learning so that attainment is now average. This has led to an improvement in the college's GCSE results in 2010. A much more consistent approach to lesson planning is ensuring students experience more lessons that are challenging and enjoyable. Aspirations are higher: a fact reflected in the more challenging targets students have in all their subjects. In the better lessons, particularly for Year 11 students, teachers clarify precisely what they need to do in order to achieve their personal targets. In the less effective lessons, insufficient attention is given to identifying the more challenging outcomes associated with good progress. In order to bring about a faster rate of improvement, senior leaders have understandably introduced a standardised approach to teaching and the use of assessment. Although all teachers follow this guidance closely, there is variability in the effectiveness of the learning which ensues. For instance, despite having their books regularly marked, students are not always clear about their current levels and precisely what they must do to reach their targets. A few of the lessons observed were inadequate.

Senior leaders have a largely accurate view of the college's strengths and weaknesses, for instance, in recognising that heads of department are more effective but some do not make sufficiently accurate judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. There are promising signs of more effective leadership of the sixth form, for instance a realistically ambitious action plan is being implemented. The need to ensure quick short-term improvement has limited the college's ability to involve staff, students, parents and carers fully in influencing decision-making. The college has recognised that it can do more to enable parents and carers to support their children's learning and plans are in place to address this. Partnerships are enabling the college to offer an impressive range of courses at Key Stage 4 and this is contributing to better outcomes. Timetabling problems this year have placed some limitations on the effectiveness of the curriculum. Despite a few glitches, the overall picture is of a college that is improving in vital areas to the extent that this confirms its satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

Up to 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.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress students make by:
 - eradicating the remaining inadequate teaching
 - using assessment more effectively in all lessons to ensure different ability students make good progress
 - ensuring students in all year groups know the level they are at and what they must do to reach their targets
 - developing a timetable that maximises the effectiveness of the curriculum.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - increasing opportunities for staff and students to influence decision-making
 - ensuring all leaders make suitably accurate judgements about teaching learning and the use of assessment
 - engaging more effectively with all parents and carers so they can be more involved in supporting their children's learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students start in the college with standards that are average, and achieve satisfactorily, to reach average standards when they leave. Attainment in most subjects has been consistently average although until 2010, students did less well in English and mathematics. The 2010 examination results are better than in previous years. For instance, the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, rose from 36% in 2009 to 50%. When this indicator is considered without English and mathematics, the improvement is from 52% to 71%. Students are now making better progress so achievement is no longer inadequate. The college's increasingly reliable assessment data indicates that further improvement is in the pipeline. In most lessons, students showed interest in their work and sometimes demonstrated considerable enthusiasm. However, there were also lessons in which students did not concentrate well because teaching was insufficiently challenging. Students' awareness of right and wrong is well developed so that they usually behave well, even where there are weaknesses in teaching.

Boys' attainment has improved because teachers have adopted strategies that encourage these students to try harder: therefore, the gender gap that existed previously has virtually been eliminated. Students for whom English is an additional language are also making better progress because they receive extra support where this is needed and they are now placed in classes appropriate to their abilities. The students with a statement of special educational needs progress particularly well because of the high quality individualised support they receive. The majority of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs met in lessons and make progress comparable to students in general. The college is making progress by improving its planning to better meet the needs of various groups. For instance, the gifted and talented students are more clearly identified in lessons so that their needs can be addressed.

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Students develop good workplace skills, because they develop above average information and communication technology skills and other attributes important to their future economic well-being. For instance, students are punctual, present themselves well and have good awareness of workplace safety. They are keen to find out about others, and are at ease in the company of those who from different backgrounds. The members of the college council recognise that it is not as effective as it might be in communicating its deliberations. Students are very involved in charitable activity led by teachers although they have relatively little opportunity to instigate actions in response to needs they have recognised. A minority of students value the opportunities they have to contribute through helping younger students, for instance, through being book champions.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 3 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 3 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

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

How effective is the provision?

Although teaching and the use of assessment have not crossed a grade boundary since the college was last inspected, these aspects have improved. Not enough lessons were judged to be good, but the satisfactory lessons inspectors observed contained important strengths. All lessons attempted to identify the more challenging work that would be given to the more able. This was most effective when teachers linked the outcomes to particular grades or levels. Lesson observations and comments made by Year 11 students indicate that this is most effective in lessons involving older students. In an outstanding dance lesson, a student's presentation was very impressive because she had a detailed

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knowledge of the assessment criteria associated with the highest grade. In other lessons, some groups of students did not progress well because they did not have the opportunity to choose more challenging work and devoted too much time to work that was not at a sufficiently high level. Committed and skilled teaching assistants were observed to be offering effective support in lessons.

Marking consistently gives students feedback on their efforts and opportunities are identified so they can respond to this feedback. Presentation is almost always of a high standard. However, too often students do not know precisely where they are in relation to their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. In some subjects, there is too great a reliance on testing as a way of keeping students informed of how well they are doing. Students are much more aware of how they can reach their targets in those subjects where they are regularly involved in self-assessment and where marking concentrates on their targets.

Effective partnerships allow the college to 'punch above its weight' when it comes to courses at both Key Stages 4 and 5. Increasingly, there is flexibility with some courses starting early and careful thought being given to ensure these are part of local pathways. In part because of the need to harmonise the college timetable with the other local providers, subjects are not always organised so as to maximise learning. For instance, modern foreign language lessons are not spread well across the fortnightly timetable and some classes have too many teachers for particular subjects.

The better use of assessment information is allowing the college to target support more effectively. In addition, there is a well-established caring ethos which means students are confident they can access any help when this is needed. The college was able to provide some striking examples of how it provides support to ensure students are included, for instance students with medical conditions. The Emmaus Centre provides a calm environment for a minority of students who are not thriving in mainstream. Students experiencing this provision develop important key skills and confidence so that they can flourish when they return to lessons.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders have guided the college through a challenging period when it was identified as providing an inadequate standard of education. This involved challenging some entrenched, ineffective practice and introducing strict guidelines to ensure better practice became established. This process has not been smooth and some staff are yet to be fully persuaded of the benefits of the changes that have been made. The college has

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recognised that the time is right for a new phase of development in which staff and students are to be more involved in charting the future direction of the college. Where the emphasis is on 'building on existing good practice', staff have more positive perceptions of the improvements being made. The senior leaders with responsibility for teaching, learning and the use of assessment have astute insights into this key area of provision and have identified the right development priorities. Weaknesses at middle leadership level have largely been eliminated and the college knows the further improvements needed at this level. The chair of the governing body has a perceptive view of the strengths and weaknesses of the senior leadership team and is well placed to support its further development. The governing body has introduced a review cycle to ensure it has relevant and up-to-date policies that support improvement. The college has a record of having acted effectively to promote equal opportunities, for instance, in reducing the gender gap. The college recognises that it can make further improvements in this area, for instance, by using a fuller range of data relating to all outcomes so that it can take a more preventative approach in ensuring all groups flourish.

The college's approach to safeguarding meets all government requirements and it is taking steps to improve how it takes account of parents', carers' and students' views when reviewing its provision in this area. Although the college communicates regularly with parents and carers, it recognises that important messages do not always reach all of them. The college is also outward looking, a fact reflected in the recent improvements made to the contribution the college is making to community cohesion at a national and global level.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 3 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 3 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 3 |

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Sixth form

The sixth form outcomes vary from year to year. For instance in 2009, progress rose quite sharply only to fall back again in 2010. Members of the sixth form make a reasonably positive contribution with many supporting activities in the main college. Sixth formers are also involved in providing leadership in a number of areas, for instance through their involvement in organising old people's parties, a dance festival and helping with the pilgrimage to Lourdes. Students reported that there have been improvements in the climate for learning, largely because of the checking that goes on to make sure they are on track to achieve their targets. Students take care to ensure their personal well-being, and their attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

In the more effective lessons, sixth formers are given the assessment criteria in order to take responsibility for achieving their targets. More challenging targets are in place although students do not always receive sufficiently frequent feedback on how well they are doing and they often have to rely on formal assessments. Examples were seen of the small class sizes being used well to ensure students received very specific feedback. In contrast, some lessons with small classes lacked sufficient discussion and active student involvement. Students reported that generally they receive the support and guidance they need. They were fulsome in the praise they gave for the support they receive in applying to higher education. This is an important factor in many gaining access to their universities of choice.

Since September 2010, a new leadership team has been in place and a clear action plan has been produced to bring about improvement. Stronger leadership is ensuring greater consistency and higher standards in the sixth form.

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

When compared with the national average, the proportion of parents and carers who returned a questionnaire was low. Of those who responded, the very large majority agreed with most of the statements. A small minority disagreed that the college helps them support their children's learning or helps their children to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors, in deciding the grade for both these aspects, took full account of the views of all parents and carers that were received. Inspectors decided that the college could do more to enable them to better support their children's learning and for this reason it was included in the section 'What the school should do to improve further'. Inspectors decided that the college does try to promote healthy living through the meals it provides and because it teaches students about what they must do to live healthy lives. However,

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students shared parental concerns about this aspect. In suggesting that the college should take greater account of students', parents' and carers' views when making decisions, inspectors are suggesting that it should investigate this matter further.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic 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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 665 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 23 | 35 | 35 | 53 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 3 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 25 | 38 | 37 | 56 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 21 | 32 | 38 | 58 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 3 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 20 | 30 | 39 | 59 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 16 | 24 | 37 | 56 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 3 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 15 | 23 | 28 | 42 | 18 | 27 | 1 | 2 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 11 | 17 | 39 | 59 | 12 | 18 | 1 | 2 |
| 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) | 15 | 23 | 33 | 50 | 7 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 17 | 26 | 36 | 55 | 7 | 11 | 2 | 3 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 12 | 18 | 40 | 61 | 8 | 12 | 4 | 6 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 10 | 15 | 38 | 58 | 8 | 12 | 2 | 3 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 10 | 15 | 38 | 58 | 9 | 14 | 3 | 5 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 19 | 29 | 39 | 59 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 5 |

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 | 59 | 35 | 3 | 3 |
| Primary schools | 9 | 44 | 39 | 7 |
| Secondary schools | 13 | 36 | 41 | 11 |
| Sixth forms | 15 | 39 | 43 | 3 |
| Special schools | 35 | 43 | 17 | 5 |
| Pupil referral units | 21 | 42 | 29 | 9 |
| All schools | 13 | 43 | 37 | 8 |

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 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 2009/10 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.



24 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic College, Telford, TF1 3DY

I would like to thank you for welcoming us so warmly to your college. Special thanks go to those of you who met with us and for your perceptive comments that helped to inform our judgements. I want to share our findings, including some ideas of how you can help the college to become even better.

Our main conclusion was that the college no longer requires a significant improvement. It is now satisfactory and does well in ensuring that elements of your personal development are good. Improvements to teaching and the use of assessment are such that the 2010 GCSE results were close to the national average. Your college cares for you well and this is an important factor in ensuring that your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Strengths in the curriculum also help you to develop good work-place skills.

To improve further, we have asked the college to ensure you make even better progress. We found that Year 11 students often know more exactly what level they are working at and what they must do to reach their challenging targets. Your teachers should do more to ensure students in every year group have this knowledge. At times, you need to have more choice including being allowed to undertake more challenging work. You can help by checking with other students and your teacher what it is you must do to achieve your targets. In addition, we found that there is scope for you to be more involved in influencing decision-making in the college. For instance, your views will help in ensuring a better timetable for next year and you may have some ideas about how the college can more effectively promote healthy living.

I wish you all the best for the future and good luck in beating the record results obtained by last year's Year 11.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector

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