

# Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School College of Performing Arts

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104020
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	355508
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Brian Cartwright HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	820
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	110
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Father Colin Fortune
<b>Headteacher</b>	William Branney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Wood Green Road Wednesbury WS10 9QS
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 556 1488
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<b>Email address</b>	admin@stuart-bathurst.org.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 35 lessons of 35 different teachers, met with school leaders and managers, representatives of the local authority and 'Black Country Challenge', the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of students and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at records of local authority evaluations, school performance data, the results of school student and parent surveys, and analysed Ofsted surveys from staff, students and 164 parents and carers.

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

- What factors are driving the rising standards in key subjects at Key Stage 4?
- How effective is the sixth form in ensuring good progress for AS and A level students?
- How is the curriculum improving achievement?
- What are the strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning, including in the sixth form?

## Information about the school

The school is of average size for a secondary school, with an above average proportion of students from many different minority heritage backgrounds and an above average proportion of students for whom English is believed to be an additional language. The school serves a wide area of Sandwell, many areas of which have above average levels of socio-economic disadvantage; although the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. There is a broadly average proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and a lower than average proportion of these have statements of special educational needs. It is a specialist performing arts college, and has a small but growing sixth form.

**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**

**1**

## Main findings

Stuart Bathurst school is now a good school, because teachers and staff throughout the organisation have demonstrated an exceptionally strong capacity, and willingness, to improve the quality of what they do. Leaders use the outcomes of monitoring of student progress very well in adapting and improving the quality of the school's provision, for example through swift adjustments to the curriculum. As a result, students now learn well across the full range of courses they study, so that overall academic standards by the time they complete Key Stage 4 have risen to above average. Given their broadly average attainment on entry to the school, this represent good progress overall. The rate of improvement in standards is remarkable, much of which can be attributed to the outstanding effectiveness of a range of partnerships. Local authority and 'Black Country Challenge' support has helped to establish partnerships with other schools that provide effective professional development for staff at all levels. There are excellent links with other 14-19 providers that help establish a comprehensive curriculum offer. Specialist agencies also work very well to further enhance the good provision for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including those with special education needs and/or disabilities. The good curriculum also plays a substantial part in ensuring students succeed in vocational courses, and is effectively led through the performing arts specialism.

The school is also a welcoming and safe place for students to learn. Many students told us that 'it feels like a big family', and appreciated the generally good relationships they had with teachers and other staff. Students from a wide range of different beliefs, backgrounds and cultures work conspicuously well together, sharing a lively sense of fun. The headteacher is passionate about ensuring the school keeps all of its students 'on board' and in purposeful learning. This is done through an on-site inclusion unit, called the 'Good Shepherd centre', that supports and cares for students that would otherwise be excluded from school. Youngsters who have experienced that support are grateful for its help, recognising that otherwise they would have lost out on learning.

Teaching overall is good, with the best learning happening when students can tackle tasks that match their abilities and interests at the very start of lessons. Some lesson plans do not make full use of the good information about students' prior learning to ensure each student maximises their potential. The teaching of vocationally based courses is particularly strong, resulting in the very good progress overall of students of middle to low ability. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades at GCSE is average, not above. The progress for the most academic of learners has also been weak in some A level courses. The probable cause for this links back to the inconsistency in planning to challenge the learning needs of each student, such that more able ones do not get sufficient opportunity to develop higher order thinking skills through debate, independent work and self-evaluation.

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Students know how well they are doing in lessons, and more often than not have an understanding of what to do to reach their long-term academic targets. Marking usually highlights what has gone well, and suggests how work could be improved, although there remain some inconsistencies between different lessons in the day-to-day delivery of the good marking policy. Students are not yet fully into the habit of making corrections or responding directly to the suggested improvements.

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

- Ensure students, particularly the more able, have more opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills by:
  - making better use of the information the school has on students' prior attainment when planning tasks to challenge their abilities and talents
  - using lesson strategies that assign those tasks to students of different abilities from the start of the lesson.
- Ensure that marking is consistently providing clear advice to students on what has gone well, and what could be improved, and provide opportunities for students to promptly respond to that advice

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Overall attainment and progress measures for students have been above average for several years, because all students do very well in vocational courses pioneered by the performing arts specialist subjects. Until recently, however, attainment in mathematics, and science was below average but in 2010, these two subjects improved substantially, so that against the national benchmark of five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics, the school doubled its performance from 2009 to 52%. The proportion of students gaining five or more good grades across all courses is very high, at 95%. Students enjoy learning and are achieving well now. Different groups of learners of all backgrounds achieve equally well, with particularly strong progress evident for less able students, and for most of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is a smaller than national gap between girls and boys attainment.

This is because of good teaching and a very good curriculum that is well-matched to students' needs and interests. That good learning is evident in the majority of lessons, particularly the well-structured vocational courses that provide straightforward routes for students to follow. Thanks to the clarity of instruction, good teacher-student relationships and a climate of high expectations, many lessons proceed calmly, at a brisk pace, with students working effectively together or by themselves, as, for example, in a good year 10 art lesson. In an outstanding modern language lesson, the teacher effectively used the school's rewards system to celebrate learning, and marked work 'live' during parts of the lesson to give instant feedback. This created an excellent working relationship that helped learners to thrive. Students feel safe, are confident that the school swiftly deals with any instance of bullying, know how to stay healthy and safe and know adults with whom they could share concerns. Year coordinators hold a strong affection in the thoughts of students, and play a key role in sustaining that 'family' feel that students remarked upon so favourably. Students stay healthy, which is reflected in their enthusiasm in participating in the two hours of sport for all, as well as a wide range of other clubs and activities

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beyond the school day. Students behave well in unstructured times around the school, and in most lessons, but occasionally there are odd examples of chatter and off-task focus, particularly where the lesson has not captured the interests of learners. These instances are generally well managed.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

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

**How effective is the provision?**

Teaching quality has improved through systematic staff development work, including training for serving teachers provided by a local partner school. For most students this is ensuring good, sometimes very good progress in most subjects. Teaching is particularly effective for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for below average ability learners. A common feature here is good pace of learning controlled by the teacher and frequent encouraging verbal feedback. Good lessons have an appropriate range of teaching resources that in most cases are accessible to all students. For some lessons, however, the good information about students' prior attainment is not being used well enough to assign challenging tasks from the outset to more able learners. As a result, these students are missing opportunities to develop high order thinking skills such as debate, discussion and evaluation of difficult concepts and ideas. Historically, the impact has shown in average, rather than above average, proportions of grade A and A\* GCSEs, and in below average progress measures at AS and A level.

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The curriculum has played a key role in raising the achievement of students since the previous inspection. The innovative Key Stage 3 curriculum has been refined both in terms of content and timings as a result of the views of staff and students and an evaluation of its impact. A shift in emphasis at Key Stage 4 has resulted in an increasing number of academic subjects, balanced by a wide range of very successful vocational courses. The impact of the performing arts specialism is outstanding, as this faculty has led vocational developments. Qualification options have been offered to match the needs of specific but small groups and individuals. For example, GCSEs in Polish and Persian were taken in 2010. Outstanding partnership work has had a very positive impact on the curriculum, for example through links with high attaining schools to support the development of mathematics, where standards are rapidly rising.

Students have a confidence in the school's ability to advise them correctly, well supported through the school's strong partnerships with professional agencies. Well-targeted support has enabled the majority of students to make the best of the opportunities provided by the school. The school works effectively with families, children and a range of agencies to best support the progress of most groups of students in their learning. The introduction of the Inclusion Centre is a pivotal development in the social and academic well-being of students facing challenging circumstances, improving their progress and self-esteem, and rapidly improving attendance.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Much hard work and determination from the headteacher and his senior leadership team has brought about rapid rises in standards. This is supported by outstanding partnerships, particularly those brokered through 'Black Country Challenge'. This support is directed at improving the previously low English and mathematics attainment. Middle leaders share that drive, seeking to further develop teaching and learning with their departments through targeted professional development. Staff are receptive to advice and positive about the way the school is getting better. Because of good tracking and evaluation by managers, underperformance is now identified quickly. This leads to changes to provision, including if necessary cancellation of ideas that are not working. The swift responses confirm the schools effective evaluation and monitoring practice. The school is a microcosm of modern multicultural Britain, with students and staff of all backgrounds working conspicuously well together. The school also has wider international links, and a very strong track record of charitable giving. It knows its dispersed Catholic Church community well, and is effective in living out and promoting, community cohesion.

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Arrangements for securing the health and safety of students and staff are robust and regularly monitored to ensure staff are fully aware of their safeguarding duties. Governors are well-informed about school performance and have regular discussions with staff. They conduct exit surveys with departing staff, and so have insight into factors associated with recent high staff turnover. Governors and school managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well, and are supported in this by good analysis from external advisers. A recent external review of school leadership has made insightful suggestions that the school is adopting. It has led to even more delegation of operational responsibilities to senior and middle managers, and the further development of partnerships at all levels with colleagues in other schools.

The retention in school of all students, including those at risk of disciplinary exclusion is underpinned by the headteacher's moral purpose of not rejecting anybody. This embodiment of acceptance for all, enshrined in Catholic Christian principles, is this school's primary purpose. No student has been excluded in recent months, and almost all groups of learners achieve equally well. They take up that equality of opportunity in moving beyond 16 to successful education, employment or training.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

Standards of academic attainment in the sixth form have historically depended on the type of course being studied. The level 3 vocational courses (BTECs) have enjoyed considerable success and here, students make good progress. However the academic AS and A-level courses were not so successful in 2009; AS and A-level progress measures have been below average, and standards lower than average. In 2010, A-level results rose to be in line with the national average but students generally missed their expected grades. School leaders have already responded by refining the admission criteria for AS courses,



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increasing the range of AS courses via the local consortium arrangements, recruiting a bigger cohort of students and increasing the number of student per subject. They have also identified weakness in the higher level thinking skills necessary in students for successful A level, and recognised that teaching of these skills must improve to meet the challenging learning needs of such students. The sixth form curriculum and the care, guidance and support for sixth formers is good. The vast majority of those who complete courses find successful employment or higher education placements.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
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**

Almost all parents and carers agree that their children enjoy school, and the very large majority are happy with their children's experience. A greater than average proportion of parents and carers responded. Several made positive comments about the effectiveness of transition from primary school, and on the good care and support of staff for their children. The few negative comments referred to perceived shortfalls in the school's response to concerns from parents and carers. A decision to abandon early entry for some students from last year's Year 9 left a few parents and students dissatisfied. Inspectors agree that whilst the reasons to abandon the plan are justified, in hindsight the original plan was flawed. A minority of survey returns did not agree that the school helped children to lead a healthy lifestyle, but inspectors consider the high proportion of taught physical education, availability of good food, and good advice on how to keep safe are strong indicators of good care for students' health.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School College of Performing Arts 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 164 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 820 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	35	102	62	3	2	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	66	40	90	55	7	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	55	34	89	56	14	9	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	29	106	66	7	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	30	100	63	11	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	28	94	59	18	11	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	18	104	65	23	14	3	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)	40	27	103	70	5	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	24	109	68	12	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	31	91	57	12	8	7	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	23	98	63	16	10	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	41	26	101	64	14	9	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	35	94	58	10	6	2	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**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.**



19 November 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School College of Performing Arts, Wednesbury, WS10 9QS**

Thank you for your lively, honest and well-considered comments to us during our recent inspection of your school. We were impressed by how many of you spoke so warmly about the sense of 'family' you feel when at school, and of the good support you get from teachers and other staff to help you with your learning. We agree with you that the school is a safe place to learn, and that staff and the headteacher are doing a good job in preparing you for future adult life. The school is good, and much better than a few years ago, as shown by strongly rising academic standards, so you can look forward to being successful in your studies here and beyond. The pace of improvement has been rapid, because the school is willing to try new courses and ideas. We think that all the staff, from the headteacher to support staff, really do have your best interests at heart, and that is why they work so hard to get things right.

To make learning even better, there are two areas we would like teachers to further improve. They could more consistently, use the good knowledge they have of your talents when planning tasks that fully challenge you, and give you every opportunity to achieve the highest possible grades. The structure of some lessons should ensure you start on those tasks from the outset. We also think more consistently good marking, and more time for you to respond to it, would help you learn from your strengths and areas for improvement. You can help by looking for those comments and responding, without waiting to be asked!

Best wishes for your success in the future

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright

Her Majesty's Inspector

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