

St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109331
Local Authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	356529
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Robert Pyner

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	748
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth Bowles
Headteacher	Basia McLaughlin
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2008
School address	Fossedale Avenue Bristol BS14 9LS
Telephone number	01173772050
Fax number	0117 3772054
Email address	st.bernadette.s@bristol.gov.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. The inspectors visited 29 lessons and observed the same number of teachers. They held meetings with senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at progress tracking and performance data, the school development plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body, students' work and numerous policies, guidelines, plans and reviews. The questionnaire responses from 325 parents, 92 students and 37 staff were also analysed.

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

- How well different groups of students achieve and in particular boys, girls, middle and higher ability groups and those with learning difficulties.
- The extent to which teaching and learning challenge and support learners and improve the achievement of all students.
- How effectively the curriculum, including the specialist subjects, meets the needs and aspirations of all students.
- The effectiveness of the governing body and senior and middle leaders in bringing about improvement.

Information about the school

St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School is smaller than the average comprehensive and serves the Catholic community of south and north east Bristol. Students transfer from six partner Catholic primary schools, although there are admissions from a further fifteen across the city. The majority of students are baptised into the Catholic faith. Around a quarter of them travel to and from the school by bus. Since February 2009, there have been five phases of building work at the school as part of the Building Schools for the Future initiative. The school is a specialist mathematics and computing college.

The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The percentage of students from ethnic minority groups is above average and those for whom English is an additional language is around the national figure. Students whose families come from Eastern Europe have significantly increased in the last few years and this group currently makes up approximately 5% of the school roll. In total, the proportion of students with special needs and/or disabilities is below average; their needs include specific and moderate learning difficulties. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above the national figure.

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

St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School provides a satisfactory standard of education. The improving curriculum provides good quality opportunities for learners and the care, guidance and support provided for students are effective. Students and their parents appreciate the work of the staff to create a safe environment.

The school is rightly proud of its work to develop a learning community based on faith and care for the individual. The result of this is an ethos which is inclusive, supporting the needs of vulnerable students well. In this endeavour the headteacher has worked hard to develop the balance of a caring Christian community with the continuing focus on raising achievement. The school has good systems of communication with parents and the number of questionnaires returned to the inspection team was significantly above average, with most supporting the work of the school. Developments in the curriculum have meant that a good range of opportunities are available to meet students' needs, particularly at Key Stage 4. This has, for example, improved the range of appropriate courses for students and predictions for examination outcomes this year show an increase compared to 2010. The school's specialism provides a broad range of opportunities for students in information and communication technology.

All groups of students achieve satisfactorily. Standards over time have been broadly average but in 2010 there was a sharp decline, particularly in English and mathematics. During the last year the school suffered the disruption caused by major building work and staffing issues in both of these subjects which led to the school not meeting its targets. However, this year staffing is more stable and school tracking data show that it is in a better position to meet its challenging targets. Taking their starting points into consideration, boys and girls make satisfactory progress overall. Inspection evidence confirms that the high quality support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities means that they make good progress, and better than middle and higher ability groups. The school has worked to refine and develop monitoring systems to support learning. However, there is some variability in the use of these by leaders to develop planning, raise achievement, hold teachers to account for students' achievement and ensure consistently high-quality teaching and learning.

Students are proud of their school. They are polite and friendly, and behave well. They readily discuss their work and generally have clear views about the support they receive and their positive experience of school. They told inspectors that they enjoy school and know staff care for them and will help them if they have problems or concerns.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but variable in quality across the school. There are some models of very effective teaching, but in other lessons the lack of pace and challenging activities matched to students' needs mean that progress slows. Marking is of variable quality. Inspectors did find a few examples, which provided students with a

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clear idea of how well they were doing, but there was limited evidence of marking that gave students specific advice on what they needed to do to improve.

The school is in a satisfactory position to accelerate development across all aspects of its work and therefore has satisfactory capacity to improve. This is because the headteacher, leaders and governors are determined to improve the achievement of all students, self-evaluation demonstrates a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and monitoring systems are increasingly used centrally as an effective improvement driver.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve rates of progress across all subjects, but particularly English and mathematics, by:
 - rigorously tracking all students' progress and intervening appropriately so that all ability groups make greater than expected progress, with the target that in English and mathematics this is at least greater than the national median
 - developing further the programme of regular review and analysis by senior leaders of the progress made by individuals and key groups of students to ensure that middle leaders and teachers are held to account
 - reporting on at each full governors' meeting, the analysis of the progress made by students, including key groups, so that the full governing body can hold senior leaders to account in a regular and systematic way.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching to at least 80% by July 2011 by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - use teaching methods that provide pace, variety, interest and differentiation in the activities for students of all abilities to accelerate their progress
 - use assessment information to plan challenging lessons that take account of prior attainment and the learning needs of individuals and groups, particularly middle and higher ability students
 - ensure that marking is regular and engages students so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Up until 2010, examination results showed that students' attainment was broadly average. However, the results last year showed a considerable dip particularly in English and mathematics. Outcomes for information and communication technology have remained in line with national figures. Analysis of previous results and lesson observations shows that, although progress overall is satisfactory, this can be variable for groups of students, although it is better for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has refined its systems for tracking students' progress and made this information more accessible to teachers and support staff. Although its use is still too inconsistent both within and between subjects to be fully effective, the latest tracking data show improvement in the progress made by key groups of students compared with 2009/10.

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Most students are keen to do well, respond thoughtfully to adults and other students in lessons and demonstrate good attitudes to learning and behaviour. Discussions with students show that they generally enjoy their lessons and appreciate the good relations found within the school. Attendance is above average. Students appreciate the opportunities to play a part in the organisation of the school. As one said, 'It makes us more rounded people.' Their moral, social and cultural development are good. Spiritual development is particularly strong; students have good self-awareness and are able to empathise with others regarding feelings. Elements of workplace place skills are developed well, such as team work and information and communication skills, but weaker literacy and numeracy skills mean that this aspect is satisfactory overall.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

In effective lessons, teachers' secure subject knowledge and good relationships ensure a variety of approaches are used equally effectively. Activities may include paired and group work where students can discuss and test their own ideas seen, for example in a science lesson observed where Year 8 students were learning about fuels. Learning support assistants are used effectively to support students with special needs and accelerate their progress, for instance in a Spanish lesson observed with Year 9. Where teachers are less effective they take up too much time talking to the whole class. This means that students have less time to practise their understanding and skills and the pace of learning slows.

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There are clear systems for tracking students' progress, but this information is not used sharply enough to ensure activities are differentiated and well matched to ability in order to provide challenging activities, particularly for some higher ability groups.

An imaginative and developing curriculum reflects the successful efforts by the school to improve this aspect of its provision. The introduction of the pathways for Key Stage 4 students has meant greater opportunities for those who wish to follow vocational options. Students develop cross-curricular skills through regular curriculum enrichment days across subjects, such as the recent 'The Eduprentice' day with a focus on mathematics and information and communication technology. These opportunities are appreciated by students. Appropriate examination options have been developed for less-able students and the specialised curriculum supports the most vulnerable students well. The specialism in information and communication technology supports learners well through accredited courses undertaken by all students.

The students receive good care and key aspects of personal guidance and support are strengths of the school. The location of the learning support team together has been effective in developing tailored provision for students. The nurture group provision is a real strength, supporting students effectively to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and self-esteem. Despite students coming from a large number of primary schools, transition procedures are both thorough and sensitive to the needs of individuals.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a calm, determined approach and students, staff and parents speak positively about the support she provides. She has been successful in recruiting a core of middle leaders who are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and committed to improvement. This group, together with the established team of senior leaders, can point to a number of initiatives which have been developed following self-evaluation procedures. The school is developing its evaluation procedures into a cohesive strand with a focus on raising achievement and recognises that it now needs to tackle the inconsistency and weaknesses in approach taken by some departments and subjects. Governors, too, are developing a more secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Recent changes to the governing body's committee structure mean that there is more continuity with school evaluation systems with the aim to provide more effective support and challenge. Partnership work has been effective in developing the expertise of teachers and middle leaders through structured courses.

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The procedures to ensure the safeguarding of students are good. Policies, procedures and training are subject to regular review to ensure effective compliance with regulations. The school meets its duties to promote equality and tackle discrimination well and is a strong inclusive community. There are well-developed opportunities for students to contribute to the faith communities in Bristol. However, although there are links with Cafod regarding projects overseas, plans to promote engagement with a wider range of community groups beyond the school and community it serves are not yet firmly in place.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

There was large number of questionnaires returned to the inspection team from parents or carers, representing about half of the school roll. Most parents and carers are happy with their children's experience at the school. Responses show that parents and carers feel strongly that their children enjoy school and are safe and cared for, that they are informed about their child's progress and that teaching is good. Most parents also feel that the leadership and management of the school are effective. A few believe that the school is less effective in supporting students to development of a healthy lifestyle, dealing with unacceptable behaviour and taking account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection team found no evidence during this inspection to substantiate these relatively negative views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School 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 325 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 748 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	111	34	186	57	17	5	6	2
The school keeps my child safe	128	39	185	57	7	2	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	139	43	177	54	5	2	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	108	33	186	57	23	7	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	94	29	202	62	23	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	86	26	198	61	24	7	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	78	24	194	60	33	10	5	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)	79	24	192	59	21	6	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	88	27	199	61	16	5	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	96	30	181	56	25	8	13	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	63	19	200	62	32	10	7	2
The school is led and managed effectively	101	31	180	55	21	6	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	126	39	169	52	13	4	5	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	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.



21 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School, Bristol BS14 9LS

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we inspected your school recently. Special thanks go to the student guides who helped us find our way around and to those of you who completed the questionnaire; we found this very useful. We enjoyed talking to you and found what you had to say very informative and relevant. This letter is to tell you about our findings.

St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School provides a satisfactory standard of education. We were impressed by your good behaviour and the quality of your relationships with adults and other students. Your attainment at the end of Year 11 is broadly average; the progress you make is also satisfactory but needs to be greater, particularly in English and mathematics. The opportunities you have through the specialist subject of information and communication technology are good. You are cared for and supported well and you told inspectors that you appreciate this. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some that is good and better. Your teachers provide you with a good curriculum that meets your interests and needs, and is improving through the pathways at Key Stage 4 and the curriculum enrichment days.

The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide clear leadership. They recognise that there are always areas for improvement, and we have asked them to:

- increase the progress that you make in your learning, particularly in English and mathematic
- improve all teaching to that of the best at the school
- improve the ways teachers, subject departments and the school as a whole are held to account for how well you are each doing.

You too have an important part to play by continuing to work hard, making the most of the range of opportunities you have at school and attending regularly. I am sure that you will and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Robert Pyner

Her Majesty's Inspector

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