

St Bede's Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119788
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358628
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Ruth James 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	734
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bill Drake
Headteacher	Mr Phil Grice
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Thirty-four lessons were observed and the same number of teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and the Chair of Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including school policies, the school development plan and safeguarding documentation. Inspectors also considered an analysis of the 272 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those completed by students and staff.

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

- Students' progress, especially in mathematics, and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The quality of teaching, especially in subjects where outcomes have been less strong.
- The effectiveness of the school's assessment and progress tracking strategies.
- The effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve rates of progress and improve upon or sustain high levels of attainment.
- The impact of the specialism.

Information about the school

St Bede's Catholic High School is smaller than average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. Most students are of White British heritage and there are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds or at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. However, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average. The school has specialist status in business and enterprise and a second specialism in modern foreign languages. The school holds the Sports Mark and Healthy Schools awards.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St Bede's is an outstanding school. As one parent commented: 'St Bede's provides not only an excellent academic standard but also a very positive environment where all pupils are valued highly.' Students thrive within the inclusive school ethos and the values of being 'a Bede' are proudly upheld by all. Central to the school's success is a strong moral purpose, shared by all, to ensure that all students succeed and achieve to the best of their ability both academically and personally. This is exemplified not only in the way adults support students but also in the way students encourage and care for each other.

The proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has significantly improved and is well above the national average. These high standards are being sustained across the school in almost all subjects. The quality of provision is enhanced by the school's specialist status which has been used imaginatively to enhance students' experiences and develop their key skills across all aspects of school life.

Teaching is consistently good. In lessons, students are keen to do well, and demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. They participate enthusiastically in learning activities and take pride in their work. Teachers plan lessons to include varied activities which engage and motivate students, but there are missed opportunities to promote independent learning and ensure that these are equally challenging for all students. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well-supported and make good progress in their learning.

The outstanding curriculum has been carefully tailored to meet the needs of all students extremely well. It is greatly enhanced by the challenge weeks, including the enterprise days, and the broad range of extra-curricular activities. The approach means that all can achieve highly. The success of the curriculum, the impact of good teaching and the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support are seen in students' success in examinations across the ability range. The impact is seen also in students' excellent personal development and attitudes to learning. Their behaviour during the inspection was exemplary both in lessons and around the school. They are keen to take on responsibility and make an excellent contribution to the running of the school. Parents', carers' and students' questionnaire returns confirm that students feel extremely safe. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. They have a well-developed sense of respect for others and excellent relationships with each other and all staff.

The success of the school is underpinned by the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by a very strong senior leadership team. The inspirational vision and drive to secure success for every student is shared by all staff. The 'can do' culture motivates students and staff alike to seek success and bring about further improvements. It is well-supported by the strong leadership and drive from middle

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leaders. This is evident in the shared ambition to ensure that teaching continues to capture students' imagination and enthusiasm for learning and to continue to drive up standards. The school has outstanding capacity for sustained improvement. The school deploys its resources highly effectively, giving excellent value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the drive to raise the quality of teaching even further so that more lessons are outstanding by:
 - – ensuring that in lessons the work set is suitably challenging for all students
 - – developing more opportunities in lessons for students to become independent learners.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students arrive with above-average attainment. They have high aspirations and are well-motivated to succeed, qualities which are displayed not only in lessons but in their enthusiastic contributions to the school and local community and participation in the varied extra-curricular activities. They make good progress and attainment is consistently high for almost all key measures, including the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics. GCSE A* to C pass rates in the specialist subjects of business, mathematics and modern foreign languages are also high, and the proportion of students achieving two or more A* to C grades in science is consistently well above the national average. GCSE mathematics results in 2010, although above average, were not quite as good as previously and this was the result of a particular set of circumstances during that year. Current assessment data indicate that students are on track to achieve much better results in 2011.

Students enjoy their lessons across the full range of subjects and their exceptional attitudes to learning help them to make good progress from their above-average starting points. They apply themselves diligently and conscientiously to the tasks they are set. This is the case for students of all abilities and with different learning needs. Support structures are very well matched to the needs of vulnerable students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enabling these groups to make good progress.

Students were proud to tell inspectors about the community spirit and supportive ethos of their school. They play a big part in this and make an outstanding contribution to their school. They arrive punctually and attendance is high. They appreciate the very positive relationships they enjoy with adults and each other and feel confident that they can seek support should they need it. Students have good awareness of cultural diversity. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and enjoy the range of physical activities the school offers. Students acquire an excellent range of skills and personal qualities to help them in their further education and careers. Almost all progress to further education or training.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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?

Teaching is good with a few lessons outstanding and a very small minority satisfactory. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They are adept at establishing supportive, encouraging relationships which foster an excellent climate for learning. There is a culture of high expectations, and this is so successfully communicated to students that they set high standards for themselves and others. As a result, their excellent behaviour and attitudes contribute very well to their learning.

Lessons are well-structured and include a good range of enjoyable activities which secure students' engagement, leading to good learning and progress. In the very best lessons teachers inspire students with excellent questioning that challenges students' thinking. In an outstanding science lesson the teacher introduced a competitive element and made very effective use of humour as he skilfully developed students' understanding of levers through a sequence of well-planned activities. Much of the good teaching has a whole-class focus with very similar tasks for all, and although this meets the vast majority of needs because students are set by ability, the work does not always challenge all students equally. In some instances opportunities for more pupil-led independent or enquiry-based learning are missed.

Marking is regular and often includes useful targets. Consequently, students have a good understanding of ways in which they can improve their work and feel well-supported to do

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so. Assessment is used very effectively at whole-school level to monitor students' progress and to plan interventions for any student who is at risk of underachievement.

The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is largely based around GCSEs, which suits the ability and aspirations of a large majority of students, but with some tailoring to ensure that it is personalised for those for whom a more diverse approach is needed. Opportunities for personal development are a highly-significant strength. The extra-curricular programme is very varied and participation is excellent. Very well planned challenge weeks fit the needs of students at different stages. The school's business and enterprise specialism is an important feature of these weeks and relevant skills are incorporated effectively. Programmes for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are also well-planned. As one parent commented about their son: 'He has made significant progress and is a credit to the school's ethos.'

Teachers' and other adults' commitment to ensuring that students experience academic and personal success is at the heart of the school. Strenuous efforts are made to ensure that students are happy, secure and well cared for. There are comprehensive and effective arrangements for pastoral care for all students. A very extensive range of more specialised support and advice from both school staff and external agencies serves students with additional learning and personal needs exceptionally well. Specifically targeted guidance is provided at key points of transition. Year 7 students have been made to feel welcome and become comfortable with school expectations and routines very quickly. Older students receive valuable guidance on courses in Key Stage 4 and on post-school options.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and productive teamwork of all staff, the school has improved strongly since the last inspection. The headteacher is driving forward with a strong vision for the school focused on nurturing all students' academic and personal growth. The commitment of staff and their strong drive for improvement are evident in all aspects of their work. They have enthusiastically embraced change and share high ambitions. Very effective systems for monitoring performance enable school leaders to identify where improvement is needed and they act quickly to tackle weaknesses and provide additional support. Regular departmental reviews are constructive. Middle leadership is strong. The governing body includes members with a wide range of skills. They use these to both challenge and support the school effectively.

Safeguarding procedures are good. Appropriate checks are carried out on all staff. The school works very effectively with other agencies to support the most vulnerable and

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promote students' well-being. Equal opportunities are promoted exceptionally well, so that all groups participate and achieve highly successfully. Partnerships with primary schools are extremely effective in supporting students at points of transition. The school has an excellent knowledge of its own community. There is a strongly-cohesive environment in the school, and there are very good links with other schools, both in this country and abroad, which add breadth to students' understanding of other faiths and cultures.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers say that they are pleased overall with their children's experience at the school. As two commented: 'This school has taught them how to respect each other and instilled confidence in them,' and, 'He is very happy and working very hard.' A small minority feels that the school could do more in helping them to support their children's learning. Several raised some concerns about the arrangements for review days. The high response rate is indicative of parents' and carers' very strong support for the school and satisfaction with the quality of education provided. Inspection findings endorse their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bede's Catholic High 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 272 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 734 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	116	43	142	52	8	3	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	152	56	115	42	3	1	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	118	43	135	50	12	4	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	112	41	133	49	20	7	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	109	40	146	54	8	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	88	32	133	49	39	14	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	80	29	155	57	28	10	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)	103	38	147	54	7	3	5	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	100	37	149	55	14	5	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	123	45	131	48	8	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	77	28	147	54	19	7	8	3
The school is led and managed effectively	114	42	140	51	6	2	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	136	50	121	44	11	4	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

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.



1 April 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic High School, Lytham St Annes, FY8 4JL

Thank you for the marvellous welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We were hugely impressed by your excellent behaviour and very grateful for the help you gave us. You are clearly very proud of your school, and rightly so. We have judged your school to be outstanding.

The results in examinations show how hard you work and how well your teachers provide for you. School leaders and all staff are highly committed to giving you the best chances to develop academically and personally. Teaching is good and the curriculum is outstanding. This helps all of you achieve and succeed. Your behaviour was exemplary during the inspection and the care and consideration you show to others is commendable. The caring ethos and the way in which you all uphold 'being a Bede' is a credit to you all. You have excellent attitudes to work and are making good progress in your studies.

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership to ensure that the school continues to improve and he is extremely well supported in this by the senior leadership team and middle leaders. As a result the school has excellent capacity to sustain improvements.

To help the school improve even further we have asked the headteacher and staff to make more of your lessons as good as the best and to ensure that the work is suitably challenging for all of you so that you have more opportunities to display independence.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James

Her Majesty's Inspector

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