

St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114327
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	357523
Inspection dates	11–12 April 2011
Reporting inspector	Robert Jones

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	949
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Joe Raine
Headteacher	Mr Paul McKenna
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2007
School address	Westway Peterlee County Durham SR8 1DE
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 36 lessons, observed the work of 36 teachers and held meetings with a member of the governing body, staff and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including policies, the school improvement plan, records of students' progress and child protection records. The inspection team received and analysed 106 questionnaires from parents and carers, as well as a number of questionnaires completed by students and from staff.

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

- The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics.
- How well the curriculum meets the needs of girls.
- The progress made by lower ability students in mathematics and English.
- How well provision in the sixth form meets students' needs.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is close to the national average. The majority of students are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. Fewer students than average have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although there is a greater proportion in Year 8. The school holds various awards, including Investors in People Status, International Schools Award and Healthy School award. The school has been designated as a humanities specialist college since 2006.

At the time of the inspection, the school was undergoing extensive building works.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has improved rapidly since its last inspection with some groups of students, notably those with special educational needs and/or disabilities making outstanding progress. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and the school works exceptionally well with outside partnerships to ensure the care for these students and for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable is first-rate. Additionally, the school engages with parents and carers extremely well. It is as a result of this caring, nurturing ethos that students feel extremely safe in school.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It varies in quality between satisfactory and outstanding, so inconsistencies remain which are preventing teaching and learning rising to outstanding. The good curriculum ensures there is a range of options at Key Stage 4 for students with different levels of ability. Pastoral care is of high quality and this, combined with the interesting curriculum on offer for students has resulted in attendance that is above average.

The good progress students make between Year 7 and Year 11 slows down as they enter the sixth form. The fast pace of developments apparent in the main school has not been replicated with the same energy in improving outcomes and provision in the sixth form. However, inspectors found signs of improvement in this area of the school's work.

The headteacher and members of his senior team lead with vision and energy. All the issues from the last inspection have been addressed extremely well. Tracking of students' progress is meticulous which ensures their needs are very well met if they fall behind. Self-evaluation is of high quality and undertaken by subject leaders as well as senior leaders. This, in turn, has led to swift improvements in all subjects and more recently in English and mathematics. This demonstrates well the school's good capacity to sustain its improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning so that it becomes outstanding by:
 - ensuring all students are fully stretched by teachers setting work that is appropriate to their differing abilities
 - widening the opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills through group work, problem solving and practical activities.
- Improve the outcomes and provision for students in the sixth form by ensuring:
 - subject leaders carefully monitor the quality of teaching and learning with the same rigour as in the main school

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- that strategies which have been successfully employed in the main school to raise standards are used to similarly develop the sixth form.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Where learning is most effective, students are given tasks that enable learning to take place through discovery and group work. In these lessons, teachers guide students through tasks without over-direction. Students are given the opportunity to give extended answers to questions. This makes them think deeply while also developing their speaking and listening skills. Some departments, such as science and history have established this highly successful climate for learning better than others. In one history lesson, for example, students buzzed with excitement, making outstanding progress taking part in various practical, problem-solving tasks about Islamic cities in medieval times.

Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly average. They make good progress, reaching above average attainment by the end of Year 11. They enjoy school and achieve well. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress as a result of the very close attention which is paid to their individual needs by a range of special courses and the work of dedicated teaching assistants. Less-able students make good progress in all subjects. The few who speak English as an additional language quickly settle into the school and make outstanding progress. Over the past two years, students have made less progress in mathematics than in other core subjects. Inspection evidence indicates that most groups of students are now making good progress in mathematics as a result of improved teaching.

Students say they feel exceptionally safe around the school, that bullying is rare and when it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly by staff. Behaviour in lessons is good and in many lessons it is outstanding. The school council is active and the school is developing its role further. Students are keen to be involved with the local community, for example, when Year 7 students led workshops on the subject of Anne Frank. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. There are considerable strengths in their understanding of cultures and religions other than their own, aided by strong links with schools overseas. Students have a sense of right and wrong, understanding that their actions have consequences, but some still require a strong sanctions system to help them make the right choices.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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?

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall but varies in quality between subject areas. It is never less than satisfactory. Where lessons are most successful, the students are busier than the teacher. There are ample opportunities for group work; tasks vary in complexity according to ability and teachers use 'checklists' or success criteria very successfully to break down skills into easy-to-use steps for students to follow. In one physical education (PE) lesson, for example, students were using checklists they had written on mini whiteboards to help them perform a lay-up shot in basketball. This resulted in all students making good and outstanding progress. There are, however, some factors that are preventing the quality of teaching and learning from rising to outstanding. Some students are not as well challenged due to a 'one size fits all' approach, with all students doing the same work or the teacher directing too much of the lesson, either talking too much or not giving students enough opportunities to develop independent learning skills such as group work, problem solving and engaging in more practical activities. The quality of assessment to support learning is good overall. Feedback to students is often detailed and precise. In English it is particularly strong, with students being given praise and specific areas for improvement on every piece of marked work.

The good curriculum is customised well in Key Stage 4 to meet the differing needs of students. There is a range of options to appeal to boys as well as girls. Provision for modern foreign languages has, in the past, been limited. This has improved considerably

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in the past year with around 50% of students opting for a language. Additional curriculum days enable students to gain knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. There are occasionally some missed opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology across all areas of the curriculum. A wide range of extra-curricular visits, sporting and arts activities enhance the curriculum which adds to students' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Excellent transition arrangements ensure students settle well into their new surroundings in Year 7. The procedures for tracking and supporting students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are exceptional. Parents of these students are exceptionally well informed of their progress. This results in them making consistently outstanding progress. There are highly effective links with outside agencies in place. This, combined with the student- led peer mentor scheme ensures that students are exceptionally well looked after in school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders have rightly concentrated on improving the quality of mathematics teaching since it was lagging behind other subjects. This has now paid dividends with students making overall good progress. Development planning, although sometimes lacking in sharpness at department level to ensure data are turned into swift actions, is effective and has ensured progressive improvements in students' attainment and their rates of progress.

The school's humanities specialism is having an instrumental role to play in the improvement of teaching and learning right across the school. The consistently highly effective techniques being used in the history department, for example, are being disseminated to other departments through the use of video technology and teachers observing each other.

The school is justifiably proud of its achievements to date and the improvements it has made in raising standards since the last inspection. School leaders have embedded ambition and driven improvements well. The headteacher provides energetic and visionary leadership and has very successfully galvanised the staff into a highly effective team. Consequently, there is a palpable sense of shared responsibility among all staff. The governing body has a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has held the school well to account. Safeguarding meets all statutory requirements and has significant strengths in its record keeping for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Bullying or any form of discrimination is not tolerated and swift action is taken on the rare occasions it occurs. The school ensures equal opportunities are promoted well,

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with any difference between boys' and girls' achievement being carefully analysed so any gaps are closed quickly. The school promotes community cohesion well, with high-quality plans and effective overseas links in place.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

Students in 2010 made satisfactory progress from their starting points and gained examination results that were average compared to national norms. Teaching, and the level of challenge provided to students varies between subjects. In some subjects, such as law, history and applied health and social care, students are reaching high standards and making good progress. In other subjects, students' progress is satisfactory. The reason for this difference between the sixth form and the main school is because subject leaders have, in recent years concentrated their efforts in improving outcomes for students and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in the main school. School leaders are aware that the same level of improvement now needs to be applied in the sixth form. Inspection evidence indicates that many improvements are underway, with more students on track to meet challenging targets.

There are opportunities for students to engage in enrichment activities but the extent of their engagement with such activities varies. The general support for students' pastoral needs, including applications to universities and colleges, is strong as is the quality of the school's engagement with parents and carers. Students value the care that is provided and the interest that teachers take in them as individuals. They appreciate teachers' willingness to provide extra help when they find work difficult. The head of the sixth form knows what needs to be done in order to improve students' achievement. Her work is now underpinned by learning mentors who are helping to keep a closer eye on students' progress.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school's work. Many of their comments focused on the friendly and welcoming nature of the school. In particular, parents and carers commented on how well the school informs them of their children's progress. Inspectors found that the quality and frequency of information passed on to parents to inform them of their children's progress was of very high quality and that, in turn, the school's engagement with parents and carers was outstanding.

A very small minority of parents and carers felt the school does not help their children to lead healthy lifestyles and that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team thoroughly investigated these issues. They found students had a good understanding of the importance of physical exercise and a healthy balanced diet. Food provided by the school meals service was found to be of high quality, although inspectors did find that on rare occasions students were drinking sugary carbonated drinks that had been bought outside the school.

Inspectors found that behaviour was good overall and especially in lessons but more variable when students were not closely supervised. They found that disruption in lessons was minimal. When it did occur, it was often the result of teaching that did not fully stretch all abilities of students or where there were insufficient opportunities for students to take charge of their own learning. While investigating this issue, inspectors found that while there is a highly organised system to record sanctions, such as detentions, there is not a similar universal system of celebrating success and rewarding students. Students told inspectors that behaviour has improved, but that this emphasis on 'negatives rather than positives' did little to encourage them to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

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 Comprehensive 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 106 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 949 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	36	61	58	6	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	42	56	53	4	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	53	50	50	47	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	48	45	46	43	10	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	37	61	58	5	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	30	60	57	11	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	22	61	58	20	19	0	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)	42	40	57	54	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	35	60	57	8	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	42	48	45	12	11	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	27	59	56	8	8	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	38	36	57	54	7	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	43	55	52	4	4	1	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.



14 April 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School, Peterlee, SR8 1DE

Many thanks for the welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school.

You will be pleased to hear that you go to a good school which has improved quickly since it was last inspected. The superb care, guidance and support you receive along with the excellent way outside agencies work with your school means that those of you who need the most support make outstanding progress. The school works extremely well with your parents and carers, which helps to keep them fully informed of your progress. Overall, you make good progress during your time at school because the quality of teaching is also good. However, you told us how the quality of teaching varies between subjects and we saw this in our own lesson observations. Your school leaders have worked hard to improve the school and this is very obvious in the improvements the school has made since the last time it was inspected.

I have asked your headteacher and staff to make sure the quality of teaching and learning improves further still by giving you work that stretches all abilities in the classroom. I have also asked them to help you to develop independent learning skills, such as working in groups solving problems rather than being instructed by a teacher. Furthermore, I have asked your school leaders to improve the sixth form in the same way they have very successfully improved the main school and to make sure students make good progress in all subjects.

You can help now by starting to take more responsibility for your own behaviour in school so that there are fewer detentions being given out by teachers. I was very impressed with your maturity when I met you, and know you are capable of this. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Robert Jones

Lead inspector

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