

Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119784
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358626
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Sally Kenyon 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	650
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Livesey
Headteacher	Mr Martin Reynolds
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 28 lessons, taught by 28 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with three representatives of the governing body, senior school staff, middle leaders, teachers, support staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at samples of students' work in lessons across a wide range of subjects and different year groups. Inspectors looked in detail at documents relating to the school's monitoring of its performance and undertook a detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress. They also scrutinised minutes of meetings, improvement plans and safeguarding procedures. The responses from parents and carers on 177 questionnaires were considered, together with replies from staff and students.

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

- Progress and attainment for all students, particularly boys.
- The management of behaviour both in and out of lessons.
- The quality of teaching and assessment to determine the impact on students' attainment and progress.
- The impact of the curriculum in meeting the needs of all students.
- The quality of leadership and management at all levels across the school.

Information about the school

Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School is a smaller-than-average mixed Catholic Secondary School. It has been a Specialist Sports College since 2004 and gained High Performing Specialist College status in 2009. In 2009 the school took on a second specialism of mathematics and computing. It is a partner support school in The Gaining Ground programme. In 2010 the school gained Leading Edge Status. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The number of students from minority ethnic groups is well below average as is the number of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average but the overall percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.

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

Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School is a good school. Some features of the school's work are outstanding, notably the students' contribution to the school and wider community and the extent to which students feel safe. Students express real pride in their school and the very large majority of parents report they are happy with their child's experience. One parent summed up the ethos of the school when she commented in the inspection questionnaire, 'There is a strong sense of mutual respect. I would not wish my child to be in any other school.'

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average, which represents good progress from students' broadly average starting points on entry into school. This is due to the good quality teaching, care, guidance and support that students receive. The school sets ambitious targets and, most of the time, achieves them. The school has met all its Specialist School targets and the specialism is being used well to harness students' positive attitudes to learning and enhance their drive and ambition to succeed.

The majority of lessons seen were good but the quality of teaching and marking remains uneven across departments. In the best lessons teachers plan creative and fun ways for students to take control of their own learning. However, not all lessons have the pace and challenge to allow students to make the best possible progress. In lessons where teaching was less effective, learning was too dependent upon the teacher's intervention and students did not make the same good progress as they did elsewhere.

Through good and effective self-evaluation processes, senior managers, staff and the governing body have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and good plans are firmly in place to tackle any areas that need improvement. For example, last year, for the first time, boys achieved markedly less well than girls. The school took immediate action to remedy this by a series of strategic interventions. Whilst this is an example of swift and decisive evaluation and review, there are other aspects of the school that are not monitored in such a sophisticated manner. For example, some policies and procedures are not reviewed with enough regularity to have the greatest impact.

Middle leaders play a key role in school improvement. However, the school would benefit from further developing their roles in order that they become more accountable for whole-school outcomes.

Improving student attainment and progress, good self-evaluation, combined with the strong and highly-adaptable leadership team, highly committed staff, supportive parents and carers and a clearly focused school improvement plan, indicate that the school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine systems for monitoring, evaluation and review by:
 - sharpening the timeliness of review and evaluation
 - increasing the role of middle leaders in whole school self-evaluation
- Ensure that students make consistently good progress in all subjects by:
 - increasing the level of pace and challenge in lessons
 - systematically sharing the best practice in teaching

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Inspection evidence, including that from lesson observations, assessment information and the school's own evaluations of teaching, shows that the majority of students make good progress in lessons. Students make good progress in lessons where teachers allow them to learn independently, have clearly focussed objectives and engaging, challenging tasks. However, such good practice is not evident in all subject areas.

There are no significant differences between the progress made by different groups of students and the majority, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make similarly good progress from their individual starting points. School data and inspection evidence show that this group of students are on track to meet or exceed their targets.

Inspectors observed good behaviour in lessons and around the school. Instances of bullying are rare; for many students, consideration and respect for others is of paramount importance. The very large majority of students surveyed feel safe in school because there are high levels of supervision at lunch and break times and they are confident that staff will help them if there is a problem.

Attendance is above average and improving due to the concerted actions of the school to take the lead on the management of their attendance. The result of this is that the number of persistent absentees has reduced by more than half over the last three years. The very large majority of students leave school and progress onto further education, training or employment.

Students welcome the many opportunities they are afforded to express their views about school through their own school council. As a result of feedback from girls about the school uniform, the school has suitably adapted it. Over 40% of students hold positions of responsibility ranging from sports, language and information and communication technology leaders to students who have set up their own extra-curricular cheerleading club. Many students make valuable contributions to the school and wider community. For example, one student told how he decided that there should be targets set to raise expectations for fund-raising. As a result, his form group alone raised over £500 for charity. Some Year 10 students spoke proudly and passionately about their experience of teaching 'silver surfers', a group of mature members of the local community who wanted to learn how to email and use the internet. There is a culture of 'can do' amongst the students and their efforts show an incredibly caring school committed to having a positive impact on the lives of others. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.

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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	2
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	1
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 has improved since the previous inspection due to a continual focus on developing independent learning. Professional development seminars led by staff have broadened the repertoire of teaching styles. The majority of teaching is now securing good progress and learning. The best lessons are characterised by lively, engaging, creative teaching which challenges students to 'push themselves' to achieve high standards. In a highly effective Year 10 mathematics lesson students were asked to spot mistakes and make suggestions regarding some examples displayed on the interactive whiteboard. This immediately engaged students in problem solving and resulted in outstanding behaviour. In satisfactory lessons, students behave less well and are not always appropriately challenged to think for themselves or produce extended written responses.

Most students know their targets and have a good understanding of their next steps towards achieving them. Inspectors saw some good examples of students assessing their own and others' progress, for example in a Year 9 science lesson where students had to review a group of resources and present their findings back to the class so that the class could assess their progress.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and generally meets the needs of the students. Some personalised pathways have been developed at Key Stage 4 enabling students to gain

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vocational qualifications, some involving local businesses. Students enjoy working cooperatively and collaboratively in various subjects; for example, the Year 7 curriculum has been adapted this year to allow humanities subjects to work collaboratively in a weekly 'creative day' and 'cultural day'. Students report that they very much enjoy these days due to the opportunities for independent learning and teamwork.

Reading and handwriting skills are well supported, including through the provision of intervention programmes for students across the school. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and a high uptake of them. Parents report extremely positively about the amount of time staff spend running extra-curricular activities and revision sessions. The senior leadership team mentor students who are at risk of underachieving and bring them to such extra-curricular activities.

Students agree that the quality of care, guidance and support they receive is a real strength of the school; students felt that there were a number of adults they could turn to if they had a problem. They can do this in person, anonymously through a comment box that goes to the school counsellor, or by email through the school council. They are very appreciative of the support they receive at transition points from primary school and leading to college entry or the world of work. Students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are well supported and nurtured so that they can enjoy all aspects of school life.

A wide range of opportunities are provided to foster self-esteem and interventions are considered sensitively, balancing each student's learning and social needs. For example, some students attend a local special school to work alongside disabled students in 'wheelchair dance'. This project is mutually beneficial and has raised the self-esteem of all students involved. The school's partnerships with external agencies enables students to access a range of services to help them make choices with regard to their own health, lifestyles and futures.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has faced some significant challenges over the past two years due to falling rolls and a reduction in budget. The headteacher has dealt with this proportionately and decisively, galvanising the staff and successfully steering them through a very difficult time. Furthermore, the school has taken this opportunity to promote itself outside of its traditional catchment areas and now has full rolls for next year.

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Staff are proud to be part of the school and feel valued because their views are taken into account when the school sets its strategic goals and improvement plans. Senior leaders have a largely accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school; however, this is not always the case with regard to teaching and learning where some of their judgments about the quality of teaching were over generous.

The school works effectively to uphold their ethos of a 'caring Christian community school' in the school, local and national community; for example, they take part in 'multi-faith week' which allows students to engage with representatives from many different faiths. The school's partnerships with other organisations have a positive impact on the learning and well-being of students.

The governing body fulfils its duties well and holds the school's leaders to account for the school's performance. Governors contribute significantly to school events and work closely with departments in school. They are also involved in meeting parents and students regarding attendance, health and well-being. Parents and carers are encouraged to attend events such as the 'family learning festival' to see the range of opportunities to learn together; this event has further increased attendance at parents' evenings.

The school successfully tackles discrimination and promotes equal opportunity. There are very few racist incidents and, if any occur, they are thoroughly investigated and reported. School leaders have monitored the outcomes of the range of groups in the school closely to ensure that all do equally well and participate proportionately in school activities. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory.

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	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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that the school is led and managed effectively. A few comments were received about behaviour and the way the school handles discipline; however, the very large majority of parents feel that behaviour is dealt with effectively. The inspection team followed up the concerns about behaviour with the school. Inspectors scrutinised behaviour records, held discussions with staff and students and observed students' behaviour in classrooms and around the school. The inspectors concluded that while there were some incidents of poor behaviour, swift and decisive action was taken to deal with them. A few parents raised concerns about communication from school regarding various issues. The inspection team followed up these concerns with the school and, whilst the very large majority of parents feel that their concerns are dealt with effectively, the school is already refining its home-school communication systems.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brownedge St Mary'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 177 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 650 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	28	118	67	5	3	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	74	42	96	54	5	3	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	53	30	110	62	11	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	31	108	61	10	6	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	57	32	111	63	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	25	114	64	14	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	24	116	66	10	6	2	1
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)	50	28	104	59	7	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	31	115	65	5	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	71	40	86	49	10	6	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	21	108	61	6	3	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	63	36	104	59	5	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	72	41	94	53	7	4	3	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



11 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School, Preston, PR5 6PB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Many of you gave up your time to speak to us and to complete questionnaires. We found what you said interesting and thought provoking and your comments helped us arrive at our judgments. We were particularly impressed with the friendly and caring atmosphere in the school and your good behaviour. We recognised that you play a very important part in making Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School a friendly, safe and inclusive place to learn.

To summarise, we found that:

- you achieve good outcomes, make good progress and attain above-average results in your end of Key Stage 4 examinations
- the good care system supports all of you and is particularly effective in helping those of you who experience difficulties from time to time
- teaching is good and is helping you learn successfully
- you are very caring, make a positive contribution to your school and local community and like to help other people by raising money.

We have asked the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning by increasing the pace and challenge of lessons and sharing the good practice in school. This will help everyone to make the best possible progress. We have also asked all leaders in the school to monitor, evaluate and review their work more often to ensure that the school continues to improve.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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