

Blessed Trinity RC College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134997
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	360671
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	John Peckham 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	1241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Brian Kealey
Headteacher	Miss Bernadette Bleasdale
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 31 lessons taught by 31 teachers and held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body, staff and advisers. They observed the school's work, including break and lunchtime periods, and looked at the school's evaluation of its own performance and strategic development planning. Consideration was given to two telephone conversations and the questionnaire responses from 227 parents and carers, 155 students and 55 staff.

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

- The extent to which the current progress of students is better than in the last two years.
- The effectiveness of the school's actions to address the historical underachievement of boys.
- To what extent the curriculum provides a sufficient range of experience and choice to engage all students.
- The evidence to support the school's view that it provides good leadership and management.

Information about the school

Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic College opened in September 2006 as a result of the merger of two former single-sex Catholic schools. The college moved into new premises in 2010 after a considerable period of disruption caused by the reorganisation and building programme. The school is larger than most secondary schools and the majority of students are admitted from the partner Roman Catholic primary schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is about the same as the national average, as is the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportions of students who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, are below the national average. The school has specialist status in humanities and sport, and holds the Artsmark.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing and governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The achievement of students has declined steadily over the last three years and is now inadequate. The progress made by many students in 2010 was significantly below that of similar students nationally. Leaders and managers have recently taken some action to address this decline but, whilst there is evidence of small improvement, actions are not sufficiently well coordinated or have not yet had time to demonstrate their impact. Boys continue to achieve significantly less well than girls and too much learning time is lost because of inadequate behaviour in lessons and around the school. The school's leaders have not put in place the strategies needed to improve behaviour.

Self-evaluation by leaders and managers lacks rigour and has not identified some major issues for development. In a number of judgements, it over-estimates the quality of the college's provision. Key issues from the last inspection have not been addressed.

Improvement planning is out of date, lacks focus and is insufficiently detailed to empower staff. Whilst there are strengths in teaching, its quality across the school is too variable and there is no whole-school strategy in place to address this. The governing body does not have a sufficiently accurate view of the college's performance to be able to hold leaders and managers to account. As a result, the college is unable to demonstrate adequate capacity for sustained improvement.

The last four years have been a difficult and turbulent time. The complex reorganisation and rebuilding programme has impacted on every element of the life of the school. While the physical stages of this reorganisation are now complete, it has become clear that until relatively recently the demands placed on leaders and managers during this time have distracted them from addressing other urgent needs. Some students' learning has been disrupted by staffing difficulties, and although these are now largely rectified, older students have some gaps in their basic skills, such as numeracy, literacy and the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

The college's new buildings clearly signal the welcoming and strongly faith-based ethos of the school. Students speak warmly of positive relationships with each other and staff, and they appreciate the environmental benefits of being together on one site, in a more secure and purpose-built environment. Most students enjoy school; their attendance is good, feel safe and are confident that there are adults they can turn to if they need advice and support. Partnerships with other establishments enrich the subjects available for students to study and there are many opportunities for involvement in extra-curricular activities.

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The college's specialist subjects of sport and humanities perform well and there are pockets of good teaching across all subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop and implement a sharp and focused programme to improve the achievement of all students, to include:
 - clear, appropriate and ambitious targets for each student, carefully explained to them and their parents or carers
 - systematic evaluation of progress data so that strategic action can quickly be taken when groups of students, such as boys, do not make appropriate progress
 - intervention to address any gaps in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology that might restrict students' progress.
- Implement as a matter of urgency, a concerted and whole-school programme to improve behaviour in lessons and around the school, so that learning can proceed effectively for all students.
- Develop a whole-school teaching and learning strategy to increase the proportion of teaching which is good and outstanding, through:
 - greater precision in the framing of learning objectives to enable students to understand more clearly what they need to learn, and that relate more precisely to their prior attainment
 - planning that includes a range of tasks and activities in each lesson to suit the abilities and learning styles of all students
 - using more active learning approaches, so that students are able to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve the strategic leadership of the college by ensuring that:
 - self-evaluation is accurate, analytical and thorough
 - strategic development planning clearly identifies the college's key priorities, in order to direct the energy of all staff most effectively
 - action plans are precise, time-limited, evaluated and effective
 - the strategic plan is regularly reviewed and updated in the light of progress
 - senior leaders and the governing body communicate regularly with parents and carers, and systematically seek and act upon their views
 - the governing body maintains a clear view of the performance of the school and effectively holds leaders and managers to account.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Students enter the college with attainment that is slightly above average. Their attainment on leaving is broadly average overall, but there is significant variation within this. Students have performed significantly worse in some subjects such as science, mathematics and ICT, and the achievement of boys has lagged markedly behind that of girls for several

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years. Despite some improvement in 2010 and projected further improvement in 2011, students' progress overall remains inadequate. Most students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. As a result of carefully targeted support, the small number with a statement of special educational needs do exceptionally well.

Many students enjoy their learning, their attendance is above average and they are motivated to do well. They appreciate the good relationships they have with most staff and particularly enjoy lessons where there is a practical approach to learning. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, for example, students thoroughly enjoyed working in small groups. They discussed their understanding and misconceptions of common number operations. These students were able to make good progress because their work related to their prior learning, and they could learn from each other as well as the teacher. Individually, many students are welcoming and polite, but the college has not set, nor encouraged sufficiently, clear expectations about the care and consideration students should show adults and each other. Most students can describe learning that has been disturbed by poor behaviour. This is most frequently associated with the least engaging teaching or where there have been temporary staffing arrangements. There are, however, a small number of more challenging students who create bigger difficulties for most staff.

Most students say that they feel safe in school and there is good supervision of the corridors and open spaces. Students have a satisfactory understanding of risks to their health and well-being, such as those caused by alcohol and tobacco. Many students participate in extra-curricular activities, including a wide range of sporting, musical and artistic clubs. The students on the school council, together on one site for the first time this year, are enthusiastically finding their feet and looking to make a bigger contribution to the life of the school. There is an extensive range of support for charities and other work, although too many students do not yet know about it. Older students undertake work experience, enterprise activities and other preparation for life beyond school, sometimes in collaboration with other schools. There are insufficient opportunities within the curriculum, however, to enable all students to enhance their communication, group work and problem solving skills.

Good opportunities are provided for spiritual and cultural development, such as themed weeks looking at the cultures of Pakistan, China and Africa. The behaviour of a small minority of students, however, show they have poorly developed moral understanding and their social development is restricted by a lack of opportunity in lessons to work together.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	4
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	3

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?

Whilst there are some strengths in teaching and evidence of an improving picture overall, the quality of teaching is too variable. In the majority of lessons, students have engaging and interesting teaching, which provides them with suitable challenge and a variety of activities, they respond with enthusiasm. Inspectors observed some good use of effective, open questioning and careful ongoing assessment of students' progress to guide future learning. There is still, however, a significant proportion of teaching where teachers talk too much, where the learning is not suitably adapted to the prior attainment or ability of the students and where learning tasks occupy students but do not enthuse them. In some lessons, teachers' planning lacks detail, does not present learning intentions clearly and makes insufficient allowance for the individual needs of the students. Behaviour management strategies are not consistent. Although there is increasing evidence that many students know their targets and current performance, most of them find it difficult to be precise about how to make progress. In a few cases, the marking of students' work, whilst regular, lacks helpful comments on how students could improve their work.

The curriculum provides adequately for most students. The subjects on offer at Key Stage 4 have been augmented by a number of BTEC and other vocational programmes, which cater better for the needs of some students. The college also makes good provision for gifted and talented students, including through the use of some AS level programmes.

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Partnerships with the local college and other schools enrich the curriculum and this enables student attainment to be average overall.

The college has some exemplary practice in supporting students in the most vulnerable situations, and staff work extremely hard with families and other agencies to support the small number of these students. Transition arrangements for students entering the college from primary schools and leaving to post-16 provision are good. Reporting systems are improving so that parents and carers are more frequently informed about their child's progress. The school works with students who exhibit challenging behaviour or behaviour that distracts from learning, but with limited success. As a result, care, guidance and support overall are only satisfactory.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Much of the senior leaders' time has been occupied in recent years with the complexities of managing the school across three sites around a major rebuilding programme. As a result, they have not paid sufficient attention to the decline in achievement and the failure to tackle boys' underachievement.

Recent appointments have strengthened the ability of senior staff to make improvements in the use of students' progress data. Many of the staffing difficulties of the last few years have also been rectified, and teachers and managers are now being held more accountable for their results. Individual subject and departmental leaders have taken actions to improve the quality of teaching, and staff development, through the teaching and learning group, is having a positive impact. However, these actions are very recent and the impact has yet to be seen in the examination outcomes of students. Despite the improvements, senior leaders have not taken effective enough steps to address underachievement, particularly amongst boys. The lack of focus in the school's self-evaluation limits efforts to target this underachievement effectively. Consequently, the school's effectiveness in promoting equality and tackling discrimination is inadequate.

Feedback from parents and carers who identified behaviour issues as a matter of concern, given at the parents' evenings held earlier this year, was not effectively evaluated or acted upon. Senior leaders have been unable to inspire all members of the school community to secure whole-school improvement. Within subject departments, there is stronger evidence of development, with much teaching observed being judged good or better. Individual areas, such as the examination results in science, have shown recent improvement, but the lack of a concerted, whole-school focus on ensuring consistently good teaching and raising attainment, restricts their impact.

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The governing body has played an important part in supporting the school during the reorganisation. Members are hard working and they carry out their responsibilities for finance and premises well. They are also closely involved in monitoring the work of individual departments and have provided some challenge to the school in areas of curricular organisation. They have not, however, sustained a sufficiently clear strategic overview of the school's direction nor held senior leaders sufficiently to account for inadequate strategic development planning.

Many parents and carers are very supportive of the school and there is some excellent practice in working with families to support attendance. However, a significant proportion of parents and carers described detailed communication difficulties with the school and do not feel they have been given sufficient guidance about how to support their children's learning. The school's policies and systems for safeguarding students are appropriate and in some cases exemplary. Appropriate checks are made in relation to the suitability of adults working in the school. The number of specific accounts from parents, carers and students over the effectiveness with which the school deals with bullying and other poor behaviour however, means that safeguarding is only satisfactory.

The college is taking action to build an understanding of the local religious, ethnic and socio-economic context and has good links with many local primary schools. Much of this work has yet to be fully evaluated.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
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	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

An unusually high number of parents and carers wrote extended comments to the inspection team on a range of issues including behaviour, bullying, the quality of teaching (particularly where staffing difficulties had required temporary arrangements) and aspects of leadership and management of the school. Some parents and carers believe that the

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college is too slow or ineffective in responding to incidents of bullying or other poor behaviour.

Inspectors found that the school has taken action to solve some of the staffing difficulties associated with these concerns and as a result, teaching has improved. The college believes that recent staff appointments will help to further address this from September 2011. With regard to the behaviour and bullying issues, inspectors found that there were few serious bullying incidents. The lack of effective, whole-school systems to promote good behaviour, however, have impacted on the ability of staff to deal promptly with all issues brought to them. This is reflected in the judgements and recommendations in the report.

Most parents and carers are happy with the progress being made by their children. Inspectors compared the progress being made by students at the college with similar students across the country. Although many individuals do very well, because some groups of students do not make the progress they should, overall, progress is judged to be inadequate.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blessed Trinity RC College 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 227 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,241 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	29	141	62	11	5	6	3
The school keeps my child safe	83	37	136	60	6	3	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	81	36	136	60	7	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	80	35	131	58	12	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	62	27	145	64	6	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	23	147	65	21	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	22	149	66	22	10	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)	57	25	136	60	16	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	29	144	63	13	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	26	122	54	31	14	7	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	19	146	64	23	10	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	66	29	143	63	9	4	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	89	39	123	54	13	6	1	0

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.



10 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Blessed Trinity RC College, Burnley, BB10 3AA

Thank you for the welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your college recently. We are particularly grateful to those of you who gave up your time to speak to us and to those of you who completed the questionnaire.

We were pleased that many of you are keen to achieve well and work hard. You appreciate your new building and the improved safety that it offers. Most of you also speak warmly of the good relationships that you have with each other and with members of staff. You have many good opportunities to be involved in extra-curricular activities, such as music, sport and drama.

Overall, however, you do not make as much progress as you should during your time at this school. This is especially true for boys. Many of you told us that sometimes your learning is prevented by poor behaviour and that the quality of teaching that you receive is variable. We agree. As a result, we have judged that the college requires 'special measures' to help it improve quickly. In particular, we have asked the governing body, headteacher and senior staff to:

- be more accurate in judging how well the college is performing and make better plans for improvement
- begin an urgent programme to improve the behaviour of students so that you can all learn more effectively
- improve the achievement of all students by carefully monitoring progress and targeting support where it is needed
- improve the proportion of teaching that is good or better and develop more active approaches to learning.

It will be important that all of you help in this effort, particularly by working with your teachers as they set higher standards for behaviour. Thank you again for your hospitality and I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Peckham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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