

St Benedict's Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112398
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378483
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2012
Lead inspector	Neil Mackenzie

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	1,329
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Matthew Carney
Headteacher	Ann Brook
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Neil MacKenzie	Additional inspector
Robert Birtwell	Additional inspector
Paul Edmondson	Additional inspector
Christine Addison	Additional inspector
Patrick Feerick	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 40 lessons taught by 40 different teachers. They listened to students read during a reading recovery session, met with the chair of the governing body and with staff and spoke with students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including data about students' progress, school development planning and the students' work. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They scrutinised 196 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and the school's most recent parents' and carers' survey. They scrutinised 135 student questionnaires and 52 completed by members of staff.

Information about the school

St Benedict's is a much larger than average size secondary school. It serves a wide catchment area in West Cumbria. The majority of students are Roman Catholic and a minority of students are from other Christian denominations; very few are from other faiths. The overwhelming majority of students come from White British backgrounds and very few students are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is also broadly average. The school meets the current floor standard. The school holds the Study Support Award (advanced level), International School Award, and has Healthy School status. The school is designated as a Fairtrade school and it has been a specialist engineering college since 2002. The school operates a Catholic sixth form centre for over 200 students, some of whom attend from a neighbouring school.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	4
Leadership and management	4

Key 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 pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- This is not a satisfactory school because weaknesses in teaching mean that pupils do not achieve as well as they should and, since the last inspection, school leaders have not tackled these shortcomings.
- The sixth form is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory and students' progress is well monitored, enabling effective intervention and guidance to take place where it is needed. Improved leadership systems in the sixth form are beginning to have a demonstrably positive impact on results.
- Students' achievement has been inadequate for the last three years because they have not made the progress expected of them from above average starting points. While GCSE results are average overall, students have consistently underachieved in mathematics. Progress in English is better but inconsistent.
- Too much of the teaching is either inadequate or only satisfactory. Students are not challenged sufficiently and do not make enough progress to reach the levels of attainment of which they are capable. Currently, students are not making enough progress to make up for ground lost in the past.
- Leaders and managers have not been effective in bringing about improvement and raising students' achievement. The school does not monitor students' rates of progress frequently enough, underachievement is not identified quickly enough, and timely support and challenge are not provided. As a result, the gap between the progress made by students in this school compared to similar students nationally is widening. The school has not improved since the previous inspection and has not demonstrated enough capacity to improve.

- The behaviour and safety of students are inadequate. Many parents, carers and students expressed concern about poor behaviour disrupting lessons. Where teaching was less than good, classroom behaviour deteriorated as a result of weak behaviour management and the pace of learning slowed. Inspectors observed orderly movement of students around the school and students were polite and behaved well when speaking with inspectors. While bullying is not a widespread problem, a group of students has been subjected to sustained bullying. Despite being aware of the problem, the school has been ineffective in eliminating it. In this respect, the school's safeguarding arrangements are inadequate for this group of students. Last year attendance was low, but has recently shown signs of improvement and this year it is in line with the national average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of good or better teaching so that attainment rises and progress accelerates for all groups of students, especially in English and mathematics, by:
 - using assessment information to plan learning activities that specifically match the needs and potential of every student in the class
 - providing stimulating learning experiences and environments that will fully engage students, increase the value they place on their education and improve behaviour within their classroom.
- Develop leadership and management at all levels to ensure more rapid and sustainable school improvement by:
 - making more frequent and better use of data to evaluate all aspects of the school's effectiveness and to inform future planning
 - strengthening quality assurance procedures in order to drive improvements at a faster pace
 - increasing the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in preventing bullying and harassment.
- Improve the behaviour and safety of students by:
 - improving the management of behaviour in lessons so that learning is not interrupted
 - acting as a matter of urgency to ensure that all students feel free from harassment and bullying and are confident that any concerns they have will be acted on quickly and effectively by the school
 - ensuring attendance continues to improve and does not fall below the national average.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students' achievement is inadequate. Examination results, lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work and the school's own monitoring confirm that students' attainment continues to be average. However, given that students start school with above-average attainment they make inadequate progress. When teaching is effective, almost all students are prepared to learn and show interest, engage well with activities and progress well. However, too often, students show little enthusiasm for their learning as lessons are uninteresting. Consequently, many become passive and some become disruptive. The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is inadequate because provision within lessons for this group of students is not good enough and work is not matched closely to their needs. However, when these students are withdrawn for specific support and interventions, they make much better progress.

Despite some improvements in the results in 2011, students still underachieve in mathematics. In English, results are better but remain inconsistent and students did not do well enough in 2011. Middle ability students make significantly weaker progress than other ability groups and analysis of the school's own data shows that little improvement is occurring. In 2011 there was a large gap between the performance of students known to be eligible for free school meals and other students and the school data indicate that this gap is not being narrowed. In the sixth form, results at AS level have shown improvement and progress is satisfactory. School monitoring systems indicate that this improvement in the sixth form is being maintained, and lessons seen during the inspection confirm this.

Most parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaire say that their children are making good progress. However, inspection evidence did not endorse these views.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is inadequate. Assessment information is not used well enough to plan or match learning to students' needs and abilities. Too often, students undertake identical work irrespective of their needs and this leads to a lack of challenge. Tasks are given to students, or questions asked by teachers, which require only superficial responses and do not deepen the students' understanding. There is insufficient opportunity for students to become involved actively in their learning and not enough effort is made to make lessons interesting. This results in low levels of student engagement, limited learning and progress, and sometimes unacceptable behaviour, which is not managed well enough by teachers. Weaknesses in teaching are evident across a number of subject areas, including mathematics, where progress is inadequate. In English, teaching is satisfactory although variable in quality. For example, last year GCSE students attained good results for literature but poorer results in their language paper.

Across all curriculum areas, teaching is good in some lessons, and occasionally outstanding, but there is not enough good or better teaching. At its best, as seen during the inspection in a Year 10 German lesson, planning focuses specifically on the needs and potential of individuals and students enjoy being given a variety of

challenging and stimulating activities to do. Their understanding is constantly checked and teaching is adjusted accordingly.

Students speak highly of the support they get from their teachers. But this support does, at times, lead to an over-reliance on adults, which limits students in developing independence in learning. Some teachers carefully choose topics that interest and excite the students, and that enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in a performing arts lesson, students' enthusiasm for Bollywood dancing was difficult to contain and helped to improve fitness levels. Too few teachers routinely find ways of celebrating students' achievement and some teaching environments are untidy and lack stimulation.

The large majority of parents and carers who made their views known say their children are well taught while a smaller proportion of students said the same. While the inspection found that students are well taught in some lessons, this is not consistently the case. A few parents raised concerns about occasions when teachers have left their classes unattended. During the inspection this practice was witnessed by inspectors and the matter was raised with the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate. In lessons, most students are cooperative. Students' attitudes to learning, however, vary and are strongly influenced by the quality of teaching and the management of behaviour. When work set is uninteresting, some students become passive and distracted, lack the desire to answer questions and do too little work. At times, this leads to low-level disruption, which interrupts learning. A quarter of the returned questionnaires from students indicated that behaviour was not good and around a third of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire indicated that lessons were disturbed by bad behaviour. Inspection evidence confirms that there is disruptive behaviour in far too many lessons.

The school has adopted multiple systems to enhance the security of the school site and these, with strong relationships between adults and students, contribute significantly to the majority of students feeling safe. Behaviour at lesson changeover is calm and well managed.

While the school gathers information about behaviour, it is not monitored effectively and sanctions are not applied consistently. Overall, the number of exclusions is below average although disproportionate numbers of students with special educational needs receive fixed-term exclusions. Students with a physical difference say they feel well supported and are not subject to bullying. However, instances of sustained homophobic bullying have not been dealt with well enough.

The school's recent initiatives to improve attendance are bearing fruit, particularly for those who are persistently absent. Attendance is currently average, having been low last year.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are inadequate. While the day-to-day management of the school generally runs smoothly, the effectiveness of leaders at all levels, especially in driving improvement, varies from good to inadequate. Leadership in the sixth form is satisfactory. However, collectively the school has not brought about the necessary improvement to raise achievement and to ensure that all groups of students achieve their potential. Consequently, equality of opportunity is not promoted consistently. The school has embarked on widespread programmes of continued professional development to improve the quality of teaching. Some benefits from this are evident with, for example, many teachers marking students work much better. However, the leadership and management of teaching are inadequate overall and improvement has been too slow. Other school improvement activities are not focused precisely enough on increasing students' progress and are not well monitored. Consequently, they have not made sufficient impact.

At present, the combined leadership team is not demonstrating it has the capacity to accelerate the rate of whole-school improvement. Some middle leaders are beginning to take responsibility for bringing about improvement in their areas of responsibility but others lack experience. The current leaders of mathematics and of English are temporary appointments. The lack of effective whole-school management systems prevents leaders and managers from working efficiently. In addition data systems are underdeveloped and this means that analysis of data does not sufficiently underpin self-evaluation or inform planning. Overall, quality assurance procedures are not rigorous enough.

The governing body is keen to support the school but has not challenged the rate of improvement sufficiently. Members of the governing body have recently undertaken training in order to more effectively evaluate the school's work and provide suitable professional challenge.

The majority of students feel safe, the site is secure, recruiting procedures meet requirements, students understand about danger and they know how to react in situations where they feel uncomfortable. For the majority of students, safeguarding meets requirements. However, for the group of students who have been subject to sustained bullying, harassment and discrimination, and for those students left unattended in class, safeguarding is inadequate and the safeguarding arrangements overall are inadequate.

The school provides a satisfactory, and broad and balanced, curriculum for all and for those at risk of becoming disaffected. In some curriculum areas, students are provided with opportunities to reflect, to use their imagination and to develop curiosity and this contributes to their spiritual development. Some partnerships to promote the curriculum are effective, contributing to a wealth of enrichment opportunities such as physical, social, cultural, artistic, enterprise and scientific activities. However, aspects of students' moral development are weaker, reflected in the number of bullying incidents and the subsequent difficulties encountered by the affected students.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

29 February 2012



Dear Students

Inspection of St Benedict's Catholic High School, Whitehaven, CA28 8UG

Thank you for the friendly welcome that you gave to the inspection team when we inspected your school. I would also like to thank those of you who filled in a questionnaire and spoke to us. We took full account of your views and those of school staff, as well as your parents and carers who also completed questionnaire

I am writing to share some of our findings with you. We found that, although there is some good teaching in your school, there is not enough to ensure you make the progress you ought to make.

We are especially concerned about the results that Year 11 students achieved last year and the amount of progress that you are making during your time at the school. We are concerned that the school's leaders and managers are not bringing about the necessary improvements quickly enough. However, we recognise the improvements that have been made in the sixth form, and it is satisfactory.

- Due to our serious concerns, we have judged that your school requires special measures to help it improve more quickly. This means your school will receive additional support to help it improve and other inspectors will visit regularly to check on how well things are progressing. Your school has been asked to do the following. Increase the amount of progress you make in all subjects, and in mathematics and English in particular, by improving the quality of teaching so that the work you are given is better matched to your needs and interests.
- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels become more effective at helping the school to improve at a more rapid pace.
- Urgently improve the effectiveness of arrangements for preventing bullying and harassment.
- Improve the management of behaviour in lessons so that learning is not interrupted.
- Ensure your attendance continues to improve and does not fall below the national average.

We hope that you will play your part in improving the school by continuing to attend more regularly, behaving well and working together to eliminate any bullying that exists in your school and, of course, working hard in all of your lessons. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Neil Mackenzie
Lead inspector

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