

Bolton St Catherine's Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135981
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	381999
Inspection dates	29–30 May 2012
Lead inspector	Michael McIlroy HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non maintained
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	996
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Buckley
Principal	Lee Harris
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Stitch-Mi-Lane Harwood Bolton BL2 4HU
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Due to national examinations taking place, few lessons of Year 11 pupils and Year 13 students were observed. Inspectors observed two assemblies, 44 lessons and a similar number of teachers across all six key stages of the academy. Meetings were held with six groups of pupils and students and a group of governors which included a representative of the sponsors. Meetings were also held with the Principal, senior leaders and nominated staff. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at academy and departmental action plans, pupils' books, information tracking the progress of pupils and minutes of the governing body's meetings. Two lesson observations were undertaken jointly with a senior leader. Inspectors took account of 145 parental questionnaires and 138 pupil questionnaires.

Information about the school

The academy opened in 2009 and was formed from a predecessor high school and a predecessor primary school. It is sponsored by the Manchester Diocese of the Church of England and by David and Anne Crossland. The academy is of average size with 947 pupils in its primary and secondary phases. The sixth form opened in 2010 and caters for students of all abilities. The academy has very recently moved into new accommodation and shares this with a special school. Almost half of the academy's pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is more than three times the average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and few pupils speak English as an additional language. Around a third of learners are disabled or have special educational needs, which is well above average. An above average proportion of these pupils are supported by school action plus or by a statement of special educational need. The academy has specialisms in mathematics and in leadership. It meets the current primary and secondary floor standards which are the minimum expectations of attainment and progress set by the government. The academy received a monitoring inspection in May 2011 when it was judged to have made good progress in raising standards.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- The academy provides a satisfactory standard of education. Variations in the quality of teaching and leadership and management are the key reasons why it is not yet a good academy. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Although the attainment of pupils in English and mathematics was well below average in 2011 in both the primary and secondary phases, it is improving steadily in both settings. Pupils make faster progress in their learning in the primary phase although progress in Year 7 has accelerated following the introduction of new teaching strategies. Reading is well taught in the primary phase but opportunities to teach literacy and numeracy in other subjects in the secondary phase are not sufficiently exploited. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall and just over half is good or better. It is stronger in the primary phase of the academy than in the secondary phase or sixth form. Too much of the satisfactory teaching lacks pace, set work is not always challenging and in the weaker lessons not all teachers tackle low-level disruption quickly and decisively enough. This contributes to some pupils not always being engaged in their learning.
- Behaviour is satisfactory. It is better in the primary phase of the academy than in the secondary phase where too many pupils are inattentive in lessons and do not focus sufficiently on their work. Pupils move around their new building sensibly and safely. Attendance has improved steadily and is now broadly average.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The Principal and senior leaders have successfully established an inclusive and welcoming ethos that has high expectations of pupils and staff. Since the academy's inception, they have used performance management procedures and training to raise standards in English and mathematics. There are variations in the quality of leadership. Some middle leaders are at an early stage in developing their roles in monitoring teaching and learning and using data and action planning effectively to improve achievement. Leaders have successfully developed links with parents and the very large majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires are supportive of the academy's work. Staff have worked hard

to facilitate a smooth and successful transition for pupils, including the very youngest, from the old schools to the new building.

- The recently established sixth form is satisfactory. Overall attainment at AS level is below average but this is improving. Teaching is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have the highest expectations of what can be achieved by pupils in lessons
 - developing teachers' expertise in behaviour management so that inattention and off-task behaviour are dealt with consistently, swiftly and decisively
 - ensuring that work is always challenging and well matched to pupils' differing abilities
 - providing training in strategies that actively engage pupils in learning, and encourage them to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - maximising opportunities for teaching literacy and numeracy across the curriculum in secondary and sixth form year groups
 - building on initiatives that have already raised attainment in these subjects and accelerated pupils' progress.
- Strengthen leadership and management by developing the skills of middle managers by:
 - providing training in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and how to improve teaching
 - drawing on existing good practice within the academy to provide training on the use of data and tracking pupils' progress
 - providing training on effective development planning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Nearly all parents and carers who returned questionnaires considered that their children were making good progress at the academy. Inspectors found that pupils' achievement was satisfactory overall and had improved since the inception of the academy. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skills and abilities that are well below those expected for children of their age. They settle in well and make satisfactory progress in their learning so that when they leave this key stage their skills and abilities have improved though are still well below expectations for children of this age. Particular weaknesses remain in their personal and emotional development and in writing. In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress which is making up for shortfalls in learning. Although standards of attainment in all core subjects were well below average in 2011, they had risen sharply, especially in reading and writing. Reading is being effectively taught. Pupils are keen to

read. They can break down words well, infer meaning well and are developing a good understanding of basic grammar and expression. Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2011 was below average but is rising.

Pupils' good progress continues in Key Stage 2 and this is making inroads into the legacy of prior underachievement. Pupils' attainment rose sharply in English and also improved in mathematics in 2011, although results in these subjects remained well below average. Lesson observations and the data provided by the academy confirmed that this rising trend in attainment is being sustained. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress due to good teaching and the effective support they receive from additional adults. This was evident in a good Year 2 mathematics lesson, where effective questioning by an additional adult promoted less-able pupils' understanding about times tables.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2011 was below average and results in mathematics and English were well below. All pupils in Year 11 last year left the school with at least one qualification at GCSE level or its equivalent. While the proportion of students gaining five good grades at GCSE level or equivalent was well above that found nationally, the proportion attaining the key measure of 5A*-C grades at GCSE level including English and mathematics was, at 42%, well below. Nonetheless, this represented a strong improvement on pupils' starting points from when the academy opened and also on the results obtained at the end of the academy's first year of operation. Data provided by the academy indicated that this upward trend is continuing and that English results in particular will improve and that the academy is likely to meet its challenging targets. Consequently, the gap in attainment between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and their peers is narrowing. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Key Stages 3 and 4 and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress similar to their peers. However, faster progress was observed in some subjects and year groups, such as in English lessons in Year 7 where an initiative to accelerate learning has been adopted.

Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers who responded to questionnaires considered that their children are well taught. Inspectors found that teaching was satisfactory overall, although some was good and a small proportion outstanding. Some inadequate teaching remains. Teaching is good in the primary classes.

Relationships between pupils, students and staff are good and teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Additional adults are generally deployed well to assist pupils in their learning. There is good use of information and communication technology in lessons, such as projectors that enable a pupils' written work to be viewed by the whole class. Laptop computers are used well to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those who are unable to write due to injury. Pupils know their targets and resources are generally well-prepared. The quality of marking varies. In many cases, it provides precise feedback to pupils about the next steps they must take in order to improve. In others, it is mainly congratulatory. The academy's planning format is uniformly used, but there is variation in how well it is adapted for individual lessons. In the best examples of planning, teachers detail individuals' learning needs, thus allowing work to be pitched at the right level for different pupils to ensure good progress.

Characteristics of satisfactory teaching were that the pace of learning was not fast enough and that work was not always well matched to pupils' different abilities. A few parents and carers raised concerns about some lessons being disrupted by poor behaviour. Inspectors found that this was the case in a small minority of lessons where it slowed the pace of learning. Too frequently in the small proportion of weaker lessons, pupils were allowed to be inattentive and to indulge in off-task behaviour, such as chatting when the teacher was talking or listening to an answer given by another pupil. Lesson activities did not always win pupils' attention from the start of the lesson and retain it. Older pupils and students in the sixth form were too often passive participants in lessons and opportunities to involve them in activities were missed.

Where teaching was good or better, expectations of behaviour and what pupils could accomplish in lessons were high and tasks matched pupils' differing abilities. In a good Year 7 English lesson on persuasive writing, more-able pupils were given harder tasks and the teacher regularly challenged them to do more. Outstanding teaching in a Year 12 law lesson, ensured students made fast progress because well-planned activities provided a high level of challenge to each of the different groups of learners. Questioning is used well to extend learners' thinking and to hold pupils' interest. Inattention was tackled immediately and clear explanations, repeated when necessary, ensured pupils were very clear about what they must do.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most parents and carers considered pupils' behaviour to be good. Inspectors found that it is satisfactory and improving over time. Temporary exclusions have been steadily reduced. Instrumental in this, has been the work of the Support Centre which helps pupils at risk of exclusions to re-engage with learning. Pupils spoken to by inspectors reported that behaviour has also improved following the move into the new building as it can be better supervised by staff. However, in a few lessons, pupils were inattentive and not concentrating sufficiently on their work. A few parents and carers raised concerns about bullying. Inspectors found that bullying is rare and that instances of cyber-bullying and homophobic name calling are quickly and robustly tackled. Overall attendance is now broadly average, having improved steadily since the academy's inception. In the primary part of the academy it is higher. Absences are routinely and rigorously followed up and the attendance of pupils in vulnerable groups, such as looked after children, is checked daily. Pupils spoken to confirmed they felt safe in the academy and that any concerns they raise will be dealt with quickly. Assemblies reinforce pupils' understanding of how to keep safe, for example, when they are near parts of the site which are still subject to construction work.

Leadership and management

Under the resolute and astute leadership of the Principal, members of the governing body and senior leaders have developed a clear vision for the academy's future. They and staff have successfully brought the two predecessor schools together and maintained the momentum of improvement following the move to new accommodation. Expectations of what can be achieved are high and staff are held to account. Performance management procedures and training are focused on raising pupils' achievement. Major weaknesses in teaching are tackled robustly. Academy-wide approaches for improving learning have been

implemented but not all, such as behaviour management strategies, are consistently applied.

Strategic planning by senior leaders has been effective in bringing about improvements, particularly in the core subjects. The academy's evaluation of its effectiveness is broadly accurate but that of the quality of teaching is over generous. Assessment procedures and their use in the core subjects to improve outcomes for pupils are a strength of the academy but these are less well developed in other subjects. Some middle leaders are at an early stage of developing their roles in improving outcomes for pupils and departmental action plans do not focus enough on improving teaching and learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is satisfactory. Contributing positively and significantly to pupils' social development, and the academy's inclusive ethos, are the strong and growing links with pupils from the special school. Discrimination is tackled well and equality of opportunity is effectively promoted, for example, through the 'open' sixth form where pupils of all abilities can study. The views of parents and carers are sampled on a regular basis. Pupils are also becoming more involved in the academy's life. For example, the academy council selected the new rewards system for pupils. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is focused appropriately on the core subjects in the academy's primary and secondary phases. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including church-led clubs, for pupils and sixth form students. Procedures for the safeguarding of pupils and students comply with statutory requirements.

The rising trend in outcomes in English and mathematics at Key Stages 2 and 4 and improvements in behaviour and attendance show that the academy has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



31 May 2012

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Bolton St Catherine's Academy, Bolton, BL2 4HU

Many thanks for making us so welcome in your new building when we visited recently to inspect the academy. I am writing to let you know what we found. Your academy is providing you with a satisfactory quality of education. Some of the main things we found were that:

- you achieve satisfactorily overall and your attainment is improving
- teaching is satisfactory overall and good in the primary phase of the academy
- your behaviour is satisfactory and improving. Your attendance has improved since the opening of the academy
- leadership and management at the academy are satisfactory
- staff have worked hard to make sure that your move from the old buildings to the new accommodation went smoothly and that you settled in well.

We have asked the Principal, staff and members of the governing body to make a number of changes in order to improve the academy. We have asked them to improve teaching so that all of it is as good as the best which we saw. We have also asked that some leaders and managers receive more training to help them with improving teaching, your learning and your results. We have also asked that you learn more in English and mathematics so that more of you do better in these important subjects and receive more qualifications in them.

Remember, you can help improve the academy as well by always coming to school, by arriving on time and by always working hard in class. Once again, many thanks for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited recently.

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy
Her Majesty's Inspector

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