

St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School

Fossedale Avenue, Whitchurch, Bristol, BS14 9LS

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The rates of progress that students make vary widely across different subjects. Progress is good in English at GCSE but has been slower over time for many students in mathematics and geography for example.
- Teachers do not always use the information they have about students' needs and abilities to ensure that work is set at the right level for students.
- Teachers mark work regularly but do not give students enough information for them to improve their work to the next level or challenge them with more difficult questions.
- There is some low level disruption in lessons that results in interruptions to learning and slower progress for students.
- Some subjects are not as well led as others, with the result that some improvements are not put in place consistently or that the quality of teaching is not checked well enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, supported by the governing body, has taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching and leadership which has resulted in improvements in progress in mathematics in particular.
- Students currently in the school are making better progress and are on track to achieve better examination results than in 2012 and 2011.
- Pupils make good progress in information and communication technology (ICT) and the sciences.
- The teaching of English and the development of literacy are clear strengths of the school. Students make rapid progress in English and develop their literacy skills well across all subjects.
- Students feel safe in the school and have a good awareness of the dangers and risks they might face. Incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons, of which seven were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons to look at specific things, like behaviour.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and other members, a representative of the local authority and school staff, including middle and senior leaders.
- Inspectors analysed the 20 responses to the on-line parent questionnaire (Parent View) and one letter in planning the inspection.
- They considered the 28 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- They observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including records relating to attendance, behaviour and bullying, performance management documentation, minutes of governors' meetings, documents relating to safeguarding and documents related to the monitoring of the quality of teaching.

Inspection team

Simon Blackburn, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lesley Greenway	Additional Inspector
Jalil Shaikh	Additional Inspector
Sarah Jones	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller–than-average secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium initiative is below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is well below the national average as is the proportion supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above the national average.
- The school meets current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school provides alternative provision in the form of hospital education to a small number of students. Additional vocational options are available for some Year 10 and Year 11 students through the South Bristol Partnership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good so that students achieve well, especially in mathematics and geography, by ensuring that teachers:
 - use all available information about students' abilities and needs to ensure that is at the right level and motivates them
 - provide regular, high quality feedback to students that recognises what they have done well, provides achievable steps to help them improve, and challenges them to think more deeply about their work.
- Ensure that students' behaviour is consistently well managed across subjects, so that the students can make the fastest possible progress in all their lessons, by checking that all staff:
 - have a shared understanding of the school behaviour policy, and that they set and model high expectations at all times
 - consistently apply the school's system of sanctions and rewards.
- Strengthen leadership and management by improving the effectiveness of middle leaders to ensure that they make accurate checks on the quality of teaching and take appropriate actions to accelerate improvements in students' learning and examination results.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards across subjects are not consistent and students perform much better in some subjects than others. Standards at the end of Year 11 have improved for the last two years and the school achieved its best ever overall GCSE results in 2012, increasing the percentage of students who achieved five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, at GCSE.
- Progress in mathematics requires improvement because the proportion of students making expected progress is below the national average. While progress in mathematics has improved, far fewer students exceeded the expected progress than seen nationally last year. Progress in English is good, where the proportion of students making or exceeding the expected progress is well above the national average and has been for the last two years.
- Progress in other subjects is variable. Students make good progress and achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT) and in science because of well-targeted and imaginative teaching, unlike in geography where progress is slower.
- The school's tracking system and evidence from lessons and students' books show that current year groups are making better progress in most subjects than they were a year ago and better progress than students who completed Year 11 in the last two years. This is also true of students supported by the pupil premium who make similar average point score gains on a year-by-year basis to other students. This is because of the way the additional funding is being spent to support their learning, such as paying for a highly experienced teaching assistant for one-to-one teaching in mathematics.
- Students' literacy skills are well developed as a result of good teaching in English. A consistently applied literacy policy encourages teachers to take every opportunity to improve students' writing and reading. Students read a broad range of texts in their lessons.
- The school does not use early entry to GCSEs.
- By the time they reach the end of Year 11, students with disabilities and those who have special educational needs have made progress at broadly the same rate as other students. The progress of these students currently in Years 7 to 11 is more varied both across year groups and subjects but, overall, they are making similar progress to other students.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar or better progress than other students.
- Students who attend alternative provision have their progress, attendance and behaviour checked regularly and they are making good progress on their chosen courses.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time is not consistently good in all subjects. This means that students do not make sufficiently rapid progress. The school provides all teachers with a wide range of information about students' needs and abilities, but this is not always used well enough to challenge them to learn new and difficult things. Some teachers give all students the same task regardless of their starting points, with the result that some students' progress is too slow.
- The quality of marking is variable across, and within, subjects. Where it is done well, teachers' marking provides clear and achievable steps for students to follow to improve their work and to reach the next level. It also offers challenging extension work to make them think more deeply. However, too much marking is superficial, providing little guidance to students to help them improve.
- All the parents and carers who responded to the on-line Parent View inspection questionnaires feel that their children are taught well and inspectors saw signs that teaching is improving in many subjects. This is reflected in the better progress being made by students currently in the school.
- Teachers develop very positive relationships with their students which enhance their moral and

social development. Most students have a positive attitude to learning which is shown through their work, their improving attendance rates and the purposeful approach they take to lessons.

- Students say that they enjoy the way they are taught when teachers make lessons fun and active. These qualities were present in the best teaching seen during the inspection. In an outstanding Year 7 English lesson, for example, students were encouraged to relate sounds to words and pictures and to develop their understanding of onomatopoeia. The teacher skilfully engaged all students and built their confidence and willingness to experiment.
- Teachers use questioning with varying success. In the best examples seen, questions are carefully matched to the ability of students so that they challenge their learning and deepen their understanding. This level of challenge is not consistent across all subjects and some teachers ask questions which are too simple or which they answer themselves.
- Some teachers regularly assess students' progress during lessons using a variety of strategies. They then adjust the learning to meet the needs of students, but this was not apparent in all lessons. In some, assessments were made but teachers did not use this information to change direction, and, in others, progress was not assessed regularly enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Some pupils told the inspection team that the worst thing about the school was the behaviour in some classes, which they said led to disruptions to their learning. A number of staff were also concerned about the low-level disruption in lessons. The inspection team observed a few lessons where poor behaviour stopped or slowed the pace of learning.
- The school has recently modified its sanctions and rewards system to the staged 'choices and consequences' approach. This was observed working very well in some lessons. Students respond well to its use, but it is not used consistently in all lessons and by all teachers. Relationships between students and teachers are generally good.
- Students are generally well behaved around the school site. Students report that they feel safe in the school and almost all parents agree that the school keeps their children safe.
- Inspectors found students to be courteous and polite. Their behaviour during assemblies and in the dining room was good.
- The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaires agree that the school deals effectively with bullying and this is supported by inspection evidence including discussions with students. Students are aware of the different forms of bullying and can talk about how to keep themselves and others safe from cyber bullying, physical, and racist bullying.
- Attendance has improved a lot over recent years as a result of concerted action by the school. It is now broadly in line with national averages.
- The number of fixed term exclusions has also declined due to the positive strategies introduced to reduce serious behavioural incidents and to keep students in school to learn.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The school's leadership and management require improvement because actions taken have not been completely effective in improving the quality of education at the school. The headteacher provides clear leadership and her vision for how she wants the school to be is increasingly shared by the school community. She has a good impact in improving the school in some areas through careful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of leaders at all levels and taking action to recruit strong subject leaders or to challenge underperformance in other teams.
- The quality of middle leadership is inconsistent. Leaders do not always hold teachers to account for their performance. Monitoring of teaching and learning in subjects is improving as a result of targeted training and mentoring, but practices are inconsistent; some students receive less challenge and make less progress as a result. For example, the school has introduced a new

marking policy but inspectors did not see this used consistently across subjects.

- The school has taken steps to improve leadership in subjects where students make less progress. These actions are beginning to bear fruit as the school's tracking system shows that students currently in the school are making better progress in religious studies and mathematics than they were previously and are likely to meet their targets. This is helping to ensure equality of opportunity for all.
 - The teaching of students with disabilities or who have special educational needs and their general care are well managed, but detailed information about their progress in lessons is not always used as well as it could be.
 - The formal performance management process is well structured. It effectively links the needs of individual teachers and groups of teachers to good quality continuous training, and informs decisions regarding movement up the salary scale. There is a clear link between the quality of teaching in the school and the position of teachers on the salary scale.
 - Records of checks on the quality of teaching show that these are successful in identifying areas of weakness and tracking how these have been addressed. Teachers are supported in their development by accomplished teachers who act as coaches.
 - The school receives £104,000 of additional funding to support students eligible for the pupil premium. It sets clear priorities for this, allocating funds to actions that will have the biggest impact on progress. For example, money has been used to employ additional staff in order to reduce class sizes in mathematics and target the individual needs of the most vulnerable students.
 - The curriculum is a strength, offering a range of appropriate pathways for students at Key Stage 4. These include a range of vocational options which provide a good match to students' needs and abilities. The curriculum at both key stages is enriched to ensure students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this is further enhanced by the Catholic ethos that is evident throughout the school.
 - Arrangements to safeguard students meet statutory requirements and are effective. The school does not tolerate discrimination of any sort.
 - The local authority offers good support to the school through the school improvement adviser who has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has supported the headteacher in strengthening leadership.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are clear and open about the fact that improvements in governance and in leadership and management were made after the unexpectedly poor results in 2010. They are knowledgeable about what is happening in the school because they visit as often as they can, going into classrooms and talking to staff, and they are involved in the process of self-evaluation and action planning. They know which departments are strong and where there are concerns. They are also aware of the actions leaders and managers are taking to make improvements. Governors understand the link between quality of teaching and pay. They know that some staff have not advanced on the pay scale because of the impact of their work on pupils' performance. Governors keep a careful check on finances and can account for the spending of pupil premium funding, although they were not involved in the decision about how to spend it. They ensure that the skills of governors are maintained by training.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	109331
Local authority	Bristol
Inspection number	405233

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	734
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Nicholls
Headteacher	Basia McLaughlin
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2011
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