

Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School

Fawley Road, Reading, RG30 3EP

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Students make good progress and are successful in their GCSE examinations. A large majority of students arrive in the school with below-average skills in English and mathematics, and make up ground quickly. Students who benefit from the pupil premium make good progress.
- Students are motivated learners and their behaviour is good. They display the Christian values of respect and tolerance.
- The sixth form requires improvement. A number of students have quite weak subject skills when they join Year 12 and are not helped sufficiently to be successful on their courses. Those who leave in Year 13 are in a good position for their futures.
- Students who need extra support and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported and make good progress. Students who are in the Asperger Unit make exceptional progress and develop strong social and life skills.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan well-structured lessons in line with students' abilities and this adds to their enjoyment of their learning.
- The headteacher's effective leadership is supported strongly by staff and governors. The impressive trend in students' results indicates that the school knows what to do to improve teaching and accelerate achievement for all students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, teachers do not plan learning and assessment in ways that ensure that all students make good progress.
- Year 12 students do not receive the on-course support and guidance they need to help them successfully complete their AS-level courses.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with senior and middle leaders.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two fellow governors, senior and middle managers, teachers, four groups of students and a group of parents. Short discussions were also held with a few groups of students during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) when planning the inspection and of the comments made by a small number of parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's assessment data on students' progress over time, internal lesson observations, minutes of governing body meetings, monitoring documentation and records related to the use of pupil premium funds, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Meena Kumari Wood, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Voaden	Additional Inspector
Tom Morris	Additional Inspector
John Skivington	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school, with a smaller than average-sized sixth form. The sixth form is in a soft federation with Prospect School sixth form.
- About half of the students are from minority ethnic groups and one third of these speak English as an additional language. The largest groups of students are of Black African and Eastern European heritage.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals and for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is in line with that found nationally.
- The proportion of disabled students or with special educational needs is above the national average. The majority of these students have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and are supported by school action plus. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is double the national average. These students have been identified as on the range of autistic spectrum disorders.
- An increasing number of Eastern European students are joining the school and this means that the proportion of students for whom English is an additional language is high.
- The Bartimaeus Unit is a school based on-site provision that accommodates those students who are excluded from internal lessons for poor behaviour for a period of time.
- The Asperger Unit is a local authority provision for 15 students, located on the school site, that educates students identified with Asperger's Syndrome.
- The school has specialist status in the performing arts and mathematics.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across all subjects so that it is all good and outstanding, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - consistently plan tasks and activities in line with their students' abilities, check the progress of students during lessons, review their responses and their work and, where appropriate, re-set work at the right level
 - share the good practice in the marking and assessment of students' work
 - incorporate the skills and expertise of the teaching assistants into the tasks and activities in lessons
 - practise good questioning techniques that help students reflect upon and extend their learning.
- Increase the proportion of Year 12 students who complete successfully their AS-level examinations by ensuring that:
 - students are given additional learning opportunities on each subject course to develop their literacy, numeracy and subject-specific skills
 - students are given good quality advice and guidance about the suitability of the course they have chosen and that subsequently their progress is regularly reviewed
 - the sixth-form curriculum offers a range of choices much more in keeping with students' needs and aspirations, so that they can acquire the skills and knowledge they need for their future career paths.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Across the vast majority of subjects, teachers have high expectations of students so that those starting from a very low base make good progress in their learning.
- Additional staffing support and additional lessons in English and mathematics are in place for those students eligible for the pupil premium from Year 7 to Year 11. This, along with other measures, means that they are increasingly as successful in their GCSE examinations as those students who do not benefit from the additional funding. The average point scores they attain in their English and mathematics GCSE examinations are in line with those of other students.
- In 2012, students made good progress in English and reached national average standards. In mathematics, changes in teaching staff and the leadership of the department have had a good impact on students' learning and accelerated their progress. Therefore, the majority made good progress and exceeded national standards; students with weak numeracy skills and more able students made remarkably good progress. The school's careful monitoring of students' work indicates that students are on track to exceed GCSE national standards in 2013, in both subjects.
- Students are given the opportunity to sit their GCSE examinations earlier than planned in mathematics and English. The school is reviewing opportunities for those who continue into the sixth form with lower grades, so that they may re-sit their English and mathematics examinations.
- In a minority of lessons, students do not always make the progress of which they are capable. This is because teachers do not consistently check that tasks and activities are adding to their knowledge and skills and then readjust the work accordingly, if necessary. In those cases where the school has identified that students are not making the progress they should, effective additional support in English or mathematics is promptly put in place.
- A number of students come to school with complex emotional and social difficulties and are at risk of not doing as well as they might. In addition, many do not have the literacy and language skills they need to be successful in their studies. For instance, in 2012 half of the students joining the school in Year 7 had reading ages below, or well below, age 11. Despite these potential barriers, most are keen to learn. This is because teaching and the support they receive are effective.
- The school places a strong emphasis on the importance of reading through the guided reading sessions and through the paired reading programme with the sixth-form volunteers who listen to younger students read. Younger boys of White British heritage, in particular, who do not show much interest in reading books for enjoyment, make slower progress in English. They enjoy using computerised literacy activities, as this motivates them greatly, and their reading is improving.
- Students who are supported by school action plus in the Asperger Unit make excellent progress in their lessons. This is because the lesson activities, including adult support, are well adapted to their learning needs. In addition, they receive carefully monitored support outside of lessons. Students who speak English as an additional language make the expected levels of progress and, in many cases, good progress as they receive good support outside of lessons. However, those who are at the early stages of learning English are not always given well-structured tasks and activities in lessons that would extend their learning. More fluent speakers of English willingly help those who need additional translations or explanations in their shared heritage language.
- In 2012, the majority of Year 13 students, starting from a very low base, made the expected levels of progress in their courses, and attained A-level results below the national average. The number of students successfully progressing to Year 13 A-level courses from Year 12 has increased this year, but is still low. This is because a number of students leave at the end of Year 12 without being successful in their AS-level examinations. The school is very aware of the need to help Year 12 students move successfully on to Year 13. Accordingly, a full-time study supervisor has been appointed this term, helping students with their independent learning skills.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- The overall quality of teaching over time is strongly improving and the quality of additional subject support that is given to students outside of lessons is good. Teachers and teaching assistants have realistic expectations of students. In the majority of subjects, they make sure that work is carefully matched to learners' different abilities.
- Teachers use highly effective ways of encouraging students to think for themselves. In a Year 11 English lesson, students were stimulated through excellent structured questioning to reflect deeply on a poem by Ted Hughes. Even those who initially were less confident about contributing to the discussion enthusiastically added their thoughts. Their mature responses displayed a good understanding of difficult concepts, such as creativity and destruction.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and inspire students to build on their previous knowledge. For instance, in a Year 10 business lesson, the teacher stimulated students' creative thinking skills by posing examination questions in a real-life business context. Students showed that they could 'think outside of the box' and suggest imaginative enterprise solutions.
- Teachers seize opportunities in lessons to develop students' moral, social and cultural skills. Year 10 students discussing homelessness and its impact on individuals' lives displayed sensitivity and good levels of social awareness. In another lesson, a student with a low reading age was supported very effectively through the teaching assistant's patient questioning. By drawing on his personal experiences, the student recognised adjectives describing his 'moods'.
- In some lessons, the teachers' question and answer sessions do not give students enough opportunities to reflect upon and extend their knowledge and skills. In addition, tasks and activities are not always structured in line with students' needs.
- Teachers, especially in mathematics and science and in the additional support sessions, set tasks that help students eligible for the pupil premium, most of whom have weak literacy skills. In all lessons, students are urged to work to the best of their ability through the use of the 'Vivomiles' rewards scheme. Additionally, staff work closely with Year 7 students when they join the school so that they make a good start in their secondary school learning. These actions are increasingly contributing to a solid foundation for students' writing and reading in Years 7 to 9.
- Oral and written feedback provides students with clear targets for improvement. Students know what they have done well and what can be improved. This is because teachers' marking of class and course work offers step-by-step feedback. This is not consistently the case in all subjects. The quality of the feedback is not always helpful and, in addition, teachers do not always ensure that students have acted on detailed guidance, where it is provided.
- Sixth-form students demonstrate maturity of thought, especially in their talk. In a few cases, teachers do not give them enough opportunities to learn how to analyse their work, or that of others, during class discussions. In some subjects, such as French and sociology, Year 12 students struggle to make the leap in their skills and knowledge from GCSE to AS level.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**is good**

- Students' behaviour is good. Students work productively with one another and are respectful towards each other and towards adults.
- Staff make sure they share their expectations of good behaviour with students during tutorial sessions, in lessons and in assemblies. In a few lessons, students are distracted from their learning as the tasks set do not sufficiently challenge them. Parents considered that the school promotes good standards of behaviour and learning and that behaviour has improved greatly in the last three years. This is because what constitutes acceptable behaviour is reinforced firmly by the vast majority of students, staff and leaders.
- The school prioritises the well-being of students who are in the Asperger Unit. In addition, those whose personal circumstances may make them vulnerable to poor attendance and behaviour are very well supported. In moments of stress, outside of lessons, many of these students choose to attend the unit and some invite their friends there. In this calming environment, they have good opportunities to reflect. This means that in lessons they are then more actively involved in

learning.

- Students who misbehave are helped to reflect on their poor behaviour and how it affects others. Consequently, attendance has much improved and is good; exclusions have reduced and are low. However, a small group of students, despite the best efforts of the school, have more erratic attendance and are not helped to catch up on the work they miss as their class books indicate gaps in their learning.
- Students feel safe. They are sensitive to different types of bullying and report that staff handle effectively any incidents that occur and that victims of such incidents are well supported. Discussions with students confirmed that a real strength of the school is the way that all students from different ethnic groups and backgrounds are valued for themselves and taught to respect one another's differences.

The leadership and management is good

- A large number of positive staff questionnaires were returned to inspectors. These revealed a shared belief in the mission of the school and in the headteacher's determination to raise the standard of education for its students, through establishing a productive learning environment. This has greatly strengthened the reputation of the school within the locality.
- The headteacher has targeted the support and teaching of students in Years 10 and 11 through structured partnerships with a number of high-achieving schools, and this has paid dividends. Senior leaders, managers and teachers carefully monitor the progress of each student and take effective action.
- The headteacher has created greater accountability in all his staff. Heads of department are largely effective in supporting improvements in teaching and learning, working within their departments, and sometimes across departments. Although the school coaches individual teachers and asks teachers to share their good practice, there is little emphasis on whole-school training for common areas of weaknesses.
- Staffing and leadership changes are made in the best interests of the students. For instance, lower than predicted achievement in mathematics and business studies resulted in changes to the organisation of the departments so the majority of students are now making good progress.
- Information gained from lesson observations about the quality of teaching, together with data about students' progress, is used to set targets for teachers. Weaknesses in the work of individual teachers are followed up with training and support. The targets linked to pay levels inform the decisions about teachers' movements up the salary scale.
- The school uses its pupil premium funds effectively and provides a range of additional support for these students, many of whom have serious complications in their personal lives and risk dropping out of school. The school has provided extra staffing in mathematics and English.
- Parents who gave their views to inspectors were very happy with their children's education, but some reported that their children did not always get homework that would help them progress in their learning. Owing to the keen focus on behaviour by senior managers in the school, very few students attend the Bartimaeus centre; this term, only two were referred there.
- Religious education lessons, assemblies, charity fundraising and volunteering activities, as well as leadership opportunities for sixth-form students to mentor younger students, are greatly valued by all students. The school proudly hosts the annual Reading Eisteddfod. Students are strongly encouraged to act upon their spiritual beliefs and the cultural, moral and social values they learn in the school.
- The school's performing arts specialism has helped students to become more confident in their performance skills. Through its partnership with the EMI Music Foundation, the school provides scholarships for students who would otherwise not be able to learn a musical instrument. In addition, the school has developed musical projects with local primary schools.
- The curriculum effectively meets the needs of students in Years 7 to 11, in particular those receiving additional pupil premium funds. A number of BTEC qualifications have increased these students' motivation and enjoyment of their learning, with excellent results. The school works

well with the Business in the Community initiative. Through its wide range of business and commercial partners, the school hosts exciting events, offering good opportunities for students to raise their aspirations and reflect on their future careers.

- Senior leaders recognise that the sixth-form curriculum, which is shared with Prospect School, is not as broad as it should be. Guidance and induction arrangements for Year 11 students do not sufficiently advise students as to whether they have the right level of skills they will need for their chosen GCE 'AS' level courses.
- Safeguarding is a strength. Highly effective partnerships with other agencies, such as social services and the local authority education welfare officers, mean that students' emotional, social and learning needs are supported very well.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well informed about how the school is performing, through regular reports from the headteacher, senior leaders and managers and from their visits to lessons. Targets set for the headteacher are in line with the agreed priorities and appropriate to the changing context of the school; they focus on the sixth form and the quality of teaching. Governors know how well the targets are being met and offer challenge or support as appropriate. They know about raising the quality of teaching through performance management. Governors also check whether the school budget, including additional funding, is used efficiently and is helping all students to make the progress they should. Governors make sure that requirements for the safeguarding of students are fully met.

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	110107
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	401102

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	Mixed
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	820
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marius Hopley
Headteacher	John Casey
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 September 2009
Telephone number	0118 9574730
Fax number	0118 9568150
Email address	Admin@hughfaringdon.reading.sch.uk

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