

St Bede's Roman Catholic High School, Blackburn

Green Lane, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 4SR

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Senior leaders and governors base their work on clear principles which commit the school to value all people and provide the best possible standard of education.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding. It reflects the school's positive Catholics ethos.
- Action is taken to improve any weaker areas of the school including where achievement in particular subjects is not good enough. Improvement in attendance, English and art has recently been secured.
- Governors know the school well and provide good support and challenge to senior leaders. The governing body is committed to making governance even more effective.
- Students show high levels of respect for adults and other students. This contributes to their outstanding behaviour.
- Students are and feel very safe in school.
- The school has managed the transfer to its new buildings very well.
- The quality of teaching, which is already good, is improving. This is leading to higher levels of achievement over time. The disadvantaged students and other have similar levels of achievement.
- The curriculum provides excellent opportunities for the most able. Provision for students with disabilities or special educational needs is highly effective.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not secure the highest possible achievement for all students particularly the most able. The proportion of students gaining A* and A grades at GCSE is too low when compared to their starting points.
- Learning sometimes slows when students have to wait between tasks in lessons.
- The developing approaches to marking and students' literacy in all subjects are not consistently used by all teachers.
- The school's website does not meet statutory requirements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons taught by 35 teachers, an assembly and a house period. They examined a sample of students' work and students' exercise books in lessons.
- The conduct of students was observed throughout the school day including at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers, they met formally with groups of students and talked informally with others in lessons and around the school.
- Documents were examined including the schools self-evaluation information, safeguarding records, information about the work of the governing body and data relating to students' achievement, attendance and behaviour.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority
- Inspectors reviewed 78 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). Questionnaire returns from 103 members of staff were examined.
- This inspection was conducted with no notice to the school because of a concern about the breadth and balance of the curriculum (including where the statutory requirement to publish information to parents is not met).

Inspection team

David Selby, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Davies

Additional Inspector

Bimla Kumari

Additional Inspector

Jane Holmes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized secondary school. It is voluntary aided by the Roman Catholic Church.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, who are supported by additional pupil premium funding, is below the national average.
- The proportion of students that the school has identified as disabled or having special educational needs and requiring support through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well-below average.
- A few students in Year 11 have programmes for their learning which include off-site provision, part-time, at the Heights Free School.
- The school works with the Tauheedul Teaching School – Futures Alliance to provide support for other local schools and within the Blackburn with Darwen Education Improvement Partnership. The Education Improvement Partnership is developing school improvement strategies within the area.
- The school moved into new and refurbished buildings in 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the improvement in the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - organise lessons so that the learning of all students, including the most able, does not slow when they finish one activity before moving to the next
 - fully embed the rapidly improving approaches to marking and literacy so that these are consistently effective.
- Further increase achievement by ensuring that students, and particularly the most able, make even faster progress so that the proportion of A* and A grades at GCSE increases.
- Ensure that the website development plan is quickly and fully implemented so that parents can easily access the required information.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Principles such as valuing individual people and humility underpin the leadership of the school. These characteristics are exemplified by the headteacher and other senior leaders. Senior leaders and governors share the vision that the school should provide the best possible education for all its students and are prepared to take the steps needed to ensure this happens.
- The school's concise and detailed self-evaluation identifies its strengths and development areas. Action is taken to improve weaker areas. For example, the disappointing GCSE results in English in 2013 have been turned around following a re-focusing of leadership roles, and the previously less-effective teaching in art has been rapidly improved.
- Roles are being reorganised as the experience grows of relatively new members of the senior leadership team. The responsibilities of middle leaders have been adjusted to ensure priorities can be met, for example, in the joint leadership of mathematics and science so that the weaker performance in science can be tackled.
- The management of teachers' performance systematically identifies appropriate priorities for individuals and the school, and links between their performance and their pay. Professional development opportunities, support and challenge are provided when there is weaker practice. Further action is taken if improvement does not follow.
- The curriculum is well planned to meet students' needs. It is extended by the 'Honours Programme', which offers individualised learning experiences and enhanced guidance to the most able. For example, one student talked with evident pride about the chance she has to learn Latin in a small group. This programme makes a very valuable additional contribution to students' learning. A wide range of extra-curricular experiences are offered, these range from informal learning opportunities to lunchtime clubs, such as chess club, homework club and the chaplaincy team, and visits overseas.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It is fostered in the way staff model relationships, through assemblies and in the many opportunities provided in lessons and other school activities. It reflects the very positive ethos of the school and leads the school to be a supportive, highly cohesive learning community.
- Senior leaders have secured improvement in a numbers of areas. These include, for example, the marked improvement in attendance and to subject leadership. The building project and move to the new building had minimal effects on students' learning.
- The local authority provides a low-level of support to the school. However, leaders work actively with other schools in shared development of effective practice. The school also offers support to less effective schools. It is a provider of nationally accredited training for middle leaders.
- The responses to Parent View indicate that parents are overwhelmingly happy with the education and care provided by the school. Many members of staff share the same pride expressed by students.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.
- The school's website does not meet statutory requirements. Senior leaders have prepared a development plan to ensure the necessary changes are made.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. Governors provide challenge and support to senior leaders. They have a good understanding of the school's performance including the quality of teaching in different subjects and take action to ensure that weaker areas improve. They are prepared to take difficult staffing decisions if necessary.
 - Governors are systematic in requesting and using information on the school's work. For example, their monitoring of the impact of the additional funding provided to support the learning of disadvantaged students is based on information at the level of detail they have requested.
 - While governors are clear of their strategic role, they are prepared to ask for specific actions to be taken. This has included ensuring that information on the school's work to support students with special educational needs becomes available to parents.
 - The governing body ensures that the school is financially secure. This includes checking that members of staff are properly aware of their financial responsibilities and that performance management is effective.
 - Governors are committed to improving the school's governance. The governing body has been restructured, governors participate in training and new governors with specialist skills and experience are appointed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They work hard and conduct themselves very well in lessons. They understand the school's high expectations and are proud to achieve them.
- Students show great respect towards each other and their teachers. This also reflects the respect shown and modelled by staff towards students. Leaders and students explain how this core principle of the school links directly to the commitment to value people equally.
- Students are welcoming, open and extremely courteous to visitors. They are pleased to talk about their school. They look after the building and the site well. There is almost no litter.
- The very high standard of behaviour means that the learning of all is supported. Students are keen to take every opportunity to learn in and out of lessons. Students are willing to use part of their lunchtimes to take part in formal and informal extra learning. This requires little supervision as students work together very well. The school is very calm.
- Attendance has risen to be above average and is increasing further. Punctuality to lessons and school is good. Rates of exclusion from school are well below the national average and are decreasing further.
- The students who spoke to inspectors said that bullying was very rare and have confidence that if it should occur, it would be dealt with effectively. The school records confirm that a very small number of instances of bullying or similar poor behaviour are recorded. Those spoken with also said that homophobic or racist language was very rare, again they confirmed that, if heard, it would be challenged by staff.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. No incidents that indicate students may be unsafe were seen in lessons or around the school. Appropriate risk assessments are in place. The continuing work by contractors on the school site is securely fenced. Students know that the school's computer system is protected but have also been taught the skills they need to protect themselves when using electronic communication equipment. There is close liaison with the Heights Free School to ensure that students involved in off-site alternative provision there are safe.
- The personal, social and health education programme is used to make students aware of potential risks they may face. For example, there is direct teaching about the risks of radicalisation and extremism including presentations from visitors including the police.

The quality of teaching is good

- Achievement is good as a result of effective teaching over time. Good teaching contributes to the dedication of students and their positive approach. This reflected the longer term view from the school's own observations of good and improving teaching and learning. No inadequate practice was seen by inspectors.
- Teachers have high expectations of students. Their good subject knowledge enables them to use challenging questioning techniques to support rapid development of knowledge, understanding and skills. Rapid progress was seen, for example, in a Year 7 Spanish lesson. Even at this early stage of their course, students, including those who may have the potential to be cautious, were keen to try out and share their skills. Their enthusiastic participation exemplified their enjoyment. While learning is rapid in many lessons, it sometimes slows when students who finish tasks more quickly than others have to wait before the next one starts.
- School leaders have identified that the development of students' wider literacy skills and the quality of marking would contribute to even more effective teaching. Inspectors saw evidence in lessons and students' books of good practice in these aspects and of improvement over time. However, these are not seen consistently in all teachers' work.
- Activities to promote reading are in place. Personal reading is expected as part of the activities in house periods. Reading is set as a homework activity every two weeks with guidance on suitably challenging texts for the most able. The recent scheme to pair Year 11 students with weaker readers in Year 8 has led to improvement in reading scores for the younger students involved.
- Students' oral skills are good, the respect shown by students to each other mean that they are willing to offer answers to questions and participate in discussions with confidence. Teachers use opportunities in lessons to allow students to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects including science and computing.
- The 'Foundation School' offers a specialist curriculum for small groups of students with special educational needs. Teaching in this area is effective and builds from the detailed knowledge and care of the students included. Staffing levels are high allowing for tightly targeted learning programmes which are well taught by teachers and teaching assistants. In addition, teaching assistants provide good support to the learning

of students with special educational needs across the school.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with attainment which is generally in line with or above the national average. At the end of year 11, they consistently attain results that are well above those of students nationally. In 2014, data held by school, indicate that the proportion of students gaining at least five GCSE passes at grade C or above, including in English and mathematics, and their attainment in English rose further. Attainment in mathematics fell slightly although remains well-above national levels.
- The proportion of students attaining A* to C passes at GCSE in a wide range of subjects is often well above or, at least above that found nationally.
- The proportion of students gaining A* and A grades does not reflect all students' starting points. The school has identified this issue and shows determination to ensure that the most able will make the faster progress needed to reach even higher standards in the future.
- The rate of progress of Year 11 students in English increased in 2014. In mathematics, rates of progress have generally accelerated over time. Leadership changes have already been made to ensure that the relatively slower progress in science gets faster. Good and improving progress was reflected in the work seen in students' books, the learning observed in lessons and the views of students.
- Gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others are closing. In 2013, on average, disadvantaged students achieved around one GCSE grade lower than other students in the school in English and mathematics. School data indicate that this gap reduced to around half a grade in 2014. When the attainment of disadvantaged students in the school is compared to other students across the country, this gap is even smaller at about one third of a grade. The effective use of the additional funding available means that the progress made by disadvantaged students has increased more rapidly than that of others.
- Some students are entered for GCSE before the end of Year 11. This is only done when the teachers are confident that it is in the best interests of the students concerned. In 2013, all students took mathematics GCSE early. Their achievement was high with a greater than average proportion achieving A* or A grades.
- The off-site provision used for a small number of students contributes to their good progress overall.
- The highly effective support for students in the 'Foundation School' means that the majority of students included make at least expected progress.

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	119793
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	448825

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	985
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Beresford
Headteacher	Des Callaghan
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2010
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