

St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School

Fossedale Avenue, Whitchurch, Bristol, BS14 9LS

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The percentage of students achieving good GCSE grades in 2014 for a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, is now above average.
- Achievement gaps between different groups of students are narrowing quickly.
- Students' achievement is good. Attainment has risen significantly since 2013 and students now make good progress from their starting points, including in mathematics.
- The school identifies where individual students need extra help and supports them well to make good progress.
- The behaviour of students is good in lessons and around the school. Relationships are respectful and productive and learning is greatly valued.
- The headteacher and other leaders have a clear vision for the school. They have taken decisive action to establish a strong team of teachers and a supportive and safe culture for learning. This has resulted in better teaching and significant improvements in achievement.
- The quality of teaching is good, and some is outstanding.
- The governing body is effective and well informed about the school's performance. Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the school's priorities and hold leaders to account well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding as some weaker features remain.
- Although boys' achievement is good overall, it is not consistently good across all subjects.
- Not all groups of students achieve equally well, particularly disadvantaged students.
- Not all middle leaders have sufficient wider school impact.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection and made 25 lesson observations, some of these with senior school leaders.
- Meetings were held with students, staff and governors. Students' work was looked at and discussed, as well as case studies from the school. There were 62 members of staff who responded to a survey at the time of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered key documents, including the school improvement plan, the school's own self-evaluation, data about students' progress in all subjects, minutes of governors' meetings and reports from senior staff and the local authority.
- The 71 responses to Parent View on the Ofsted website were taken into account along with the school's own parent survey.

Inspection team

Paul Scott, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Noureddin Khassal	Additional inspector
Catherine Robinson-Slater	Additional inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students entitled to additional support (disadvantaged students) through the pupil premium has risen and is now close to the national average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for looked after children and students eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above the national average.
- A small number of students are educated through alternative provision, including hospital education and local college-based courses through the South Bristol Partnership.
- The school met the current floor standards (the government's minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching in order to raise achievement by:
 - ensuring all groups of students, particularly boys and some disadvantaged students, do as well as they can in all subjects.
 - making sure all students respond well to the guidance given by teachers in the comments in their marking.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring middle leaders have a greater impact in bringing about improvements by sharing the best practice in their subjects more widely.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the senior leadership team provide strong leadership with a clear vision and passion for improvement that is evident to all staff in the school. There are high expectations for students' achievement and this is reflected in the high expectations of the staff.
- Leadership at all levels has developed very successfully. The supportive culture in the school, the encouragement of the headteacher and other leaders, along with effective training for teachers and leaders, have established a school that is improving quickly.
- Typically staff feel they are valued members of the team and many commented on the support and opportunities for further development provided. The headteacher's support in moving the school forward was highlighted by staff. The work of middle leaders is developing well. Middle leaders are now having a greater impact and are increasingly supporting members of their departments but are not all sharing the best practice in their subjects more widely.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths. They have prioritised the areas for development and tackle them effectively. The headteacher's leadership is securing increasing capacity for improvement. Decisive actions by senior leaders in the management of performance mean that all teachers and leaders have clear targets and understand how they can contribute to the school's development.
- Pupil premium funding is well spent. The very effective identification of individual students' needs and the targeting of support help to increase the rates of progress of eligible students. Leaders are aware that the progress of disadvantaged students could be improved further.
- The school ethos promotes equality of opportunity. Individuals are valued and students are encouraged to think about how they can be successful members of a diverse society. Assemblies support the school's ethos and help to promote British values such as freedom and democracy. During an assembly related to Remembrance Day a poignant atmosphere was created with the effective use of video and music. Students were able to think carefully about the sacrifices made during times of war and to appreciate the opportunities they now have.
- Lesson observations, learning walks and a scrutiny of students' work ensure that there is a considered approach by leaders to bringing about improvements, for example, in the quality of teaching. There is a relentless focus on improving the experience of students. Leaders appreciate that there are some relatively weaker areas still to tackle such as challenging individual students further and making sure all students respond to the high-quality feedback already given by teachers.
- The curriculum prepares students well for life in modern Britain. Students have good opportunities to develop both personally and academically. The school is carefully implementing the new National Curriculum to ensure that a broad and balanced range of opportunities are provided which meet students' needs and aspirations.
- Leaders take opportunities to survey parents and obtain their views. A small number of parents think the school should do more about behaviour. However, evidence indicates that leaders have effective systems for managing behaviour and are actively seeking to improve processes further.
- Guidance to assist students to make informed choices about the next steps in their education, training or employment is good. As well as a range of visits and effective transition arrangements for colleges, lessons explore career opportunities and put learning into real-life contexts.
- Leaders monitor well the progress and attendance of students attending alternative provision. They ensure that they receive regular updates from providers and are able to review the arrangements effectively.
- The school is supported well by the local authority. Leaders make good use of external reviews and of support with moderation of assessments to validate the school's own judgements.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and well understood. Staff liaise with outside agencies effectively and track any issues with clear systems to help protect students from harm.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are knowledgeable about the school's work, including students' academic achievements and how these compare to results nationally. They question school leaders about the performance of the school and offer suitable challenge.
 - Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
 - The arrangements for the management of staff performance, the way staff are held to account and how this relates to pay increases are well understood by governors. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and appreciate the rationale behind the staff changes over recent years.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. Students typically have good attitudes to learning. They are polite and personable in and out of lessons. Students appreciate the opportunities that are provided by the school and are considerate towards others. They are welcoming to visitors and actively engage in discussions with them about the school.
- The school checks closely on students' behaviour, including those in alternative provision, and sets high standards for behaviour. Although recently there has been a number of permanent exclusions, good systems in the school support students in making positive choices. Staff are effective in dealing with any issues that arise. Students state that they feel the school helps them to deal well with any issues such as bullying.
- Rewards and sanctions in the school are clear and well understood by students. The school makes effective use of internal exclusions when necessary to support individual students.
- Good attendance is promoted and the school tracks attendance effectively. Attendance is similar to the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are given opportunities to develop a good understanding of how they can keep safe in school and in the wider community. The curriculum promotes positive attitudes to e-safety and risk management.
- The great majority of parents, carers, staff and students agree that students are safe in the school and that behaviour is well managed.
- Students feel safe in lessons to make a contribution and are not inhibited by fear of getting things wrong.
- Systems are in place to ensure good checks are made on students' safety in any off-site provision.
- Personal, social and health education, effective tutoring and the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural ethos in the school help to promote equality of opportunity and to develop a community spirit that values all students and emphasises mutual respect.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Relationships between students and teachers are very positive and this helps to establish a purposeful and respectful learning environment that encourages learners to participate in lessons. Teachers have high expectations.
- Good subject knowledge and effective procedures for identifying and reviewing the needs of individuals and groups of students ensure that targets are understood by students and learning is well planned.
- High-quality feedback is given to students and the time to respond to teachers' comments is usually set aside in lessons. Where learning is most effective the dialogue between students and adults promotes outstanding progress. There are when times students' responses to the guidance and feedback they receive are too superficial for them to have a good impact.
- Teachers' very good questioning skills usually help them in assessing accurately students' level of understanding with a high degree of precision.
- Teachers make good use of progress data to plan lessons and to identify where individual support may be needed. A focus on specific groups such as disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs has helped to lead to more targeted support to increase rates of progress for these students. However, efforts to reduce differences in achievement, for example between boys and girls and between disadvantaged students and their peers, although improving, are not yet fully successful.
- The school's work to promote literacy and reading and to develop students' mathematical skills is good. The school effectively identifies students who are at an early stage of reading and implements a successful programme to support their progress. Leaders make checks on the impact of different actions taken.
- Spiritual, moral, cultural and social education is effectively promoted in many lessons and throughout the school. Discussions in lessons often prompt students to think about how what they are learning about has moral and social dimensions for society.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades in GCSE, including in English and mathematics, is above the national average. Rates of progress have improved significantly. The proportion of students in Years 10 and 11 that make and exceed national expectations in English and mathematics has increased significantly.
- The school has focused on improving attainment in all subjects and is particularly successful in English, mathematics, science, religious education, business studies, music and physical education. Progress in mathematics is now good and has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Progress in English is good. Boys do not achieve as well as girls in English but this gap is narrowing and the difference is smaller than that seen nationally.
- The most able of students make at least good progress in a range of subjects. The proportion of students that achieve A and A* grades at GCSE exceeds the national average.
- The school's good use of information from checks on students' progress has focused teaching well and helps to set targets for individuals and groups of students very effectively to promote significant improvements in progress. The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good because support is well targeted and its impact is carefully checked. Students from minority ethnic heritages also achieve well.
- The school is no longer entering students early for GCSE examinations.
- Students learning off site do well relative to their starting points and all continue studies in English and mathematics.
- Targeted funding for Year 7 catch-up is well used so those who enter below the expected standards in English and mathematics make good progress with effective additional support.
- The attainment of disadvantaged students eligible for additional funding at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2013 was below the national average and below that of their peers for both English and mathematics. The gap was just over one GCSE grade below in English and one and a half grades below in mathematics. The school can demonstrate that these gaps are now reducing rapidly. Disadvantaged students are making much more progress now compared to similar students nationally.

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	448974

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	737
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Nicholls
Headteacher	Basia McLaughlin
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 November 2012
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