



Bishop Walsh Catholic School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103536
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276947
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Davinder Dosanjh HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Wylde Green Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Sutton Coldfield
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		West Midlands B76 1QT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 3513215
Number on roll	923	Fax number	0121 3132142
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Fr David Cousins
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr M A Moran

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bishop Walsh Catholic School is a very popular mixed-ability school and has been a specialist performing arts college since September 2000. The school was granted a second specialism in mathematics and computing in September 2004. There are 941 pupils on roll, of whom 191 are in the sixth form. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups, pupils receiving free school meals and pupils who have special educational needs are all much lower than the national average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. This matches the school's view of itself. There are significant strengths in pupils' achievement, leadership, and in care, guidance and support. These views are echoed in the parents' questionnaire completed before the inspection. Pupils achieve well and continue to improve. The excellent GCSE results in 2005 were the best in the school's history. Particularly successful strategies to raise achievement in Year 10 and 11 include targeted intervention for specific groups. The school is not complacent about raising achievement and has identified further ways to improve provision in Years 7 to 9. Behaviour and attendance are very good. Whilst teaching is good, in isolated lessons teachers do not engage pupils sufficiently in their learning. Good guidance and support ensure that pupils feel safe and enjoy learning. Pupils contribute positively to the school and the community and accept responsibility willingly. Leadership and management are good. The school successfully meets its aims as a performing arts college and in the additional specialism of mathematics and computing. The direction set by the headteacher and senior management team is outstanding. Improvement since the last inspection is good and the school has good capacity to improve further. The school has clear priorities for development and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The efficiency and the effectiveness of the sixth form are good. Retention and pass rates are high. Achievement and standards have improved significantly since the last inspection. There is close collaboration with a partner school to enable a broader curriculum to be offered and this is under constant review. The sixth form study centre is an effective resource, valued by students and supported well by the learning mentor. Sixth form students actively take part in whole-school events, such as the school production and anti-bullying initiatives. There is good care and guidance to support students in reaching their aspirations. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The sixth form provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share good practice in teaching and learning more effectively across areas of the curriculum so that there is better consistency of practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with attainment which is well above the average and they make good progress by the end of Year 11, although this varies from outstanding in some subject areas to satisfactory in others. Standards overall are exceptionally high. By the end of Year 9, pupils reach standards that are well above the average. They make good

progress in English but satisfactory progress in mathematics and science. By the end of Year 11, the school's results have shown a significant improvement since 2001. In 2005, the school achieved its best ever GCSE results, with 88% of pupils achieving 5 A* to C grades. The performance of pupils who are entered early for GCSEs has been impressive. There is no underachievement amongst particular groups of pupils. Standards in the sixth form are good and above national averages. There has been a substantial improvement in results at both A and AS level. The number of students achieving higher grades has also increased. There is rigorous monitoring of performance using a range of data sets and the school identifies where targets have been met or exceeded.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils behave well and are extremely polite to each other and to adults in school. The number of permanently excluded pupils is consistently low. Pupils like coming to school and being in each other's company, and this is reflected in the consistently high attendance figures. Even though opportunities to experience multi-cultural diversity are limited, there is a very high level of harmony throughout the school, with excellent relationships. This is a key strength and results in pupils feeling safe and able to work in a secure and orderly environment. Pupils work well together in lessons, collaborating and co-operating to achieve high quality work. For example, in a citizenship lesson, groups of pupils were observed producing good plans and delegating responsibilities to carry out their Lenten fundraising activities. All these skills are invaluable in helping pupils to face the world of work and secure their future economic well-being. The sensitive and caring nature of the pupils is instrumental in minimising the occurrence of bullying or racist incidents.

Pupils make a positive contribution to school life through completing regular questionnaires and participating in the active school council. Positive outcomes include a healthier lunchtime menu and seating areas in the playground. In the wider community, pupils raise considerable funds for different charities and are especially supportive of projects overseas to help those in need. Throughout the school, pupils are taught the importance of healthy lifestyles and what they need to do to stay safe; most act on these messages well but some pupils still make unhealthy snack and meal choices, especially with fizzy drinks at the start of the day and at break time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school judges that teaching and learning are good and inspectors agree. This enables pupils to make good progress. Most teaching is lively and engaging, and pupils respond enthusiastically to the well-pitched expectations. Skilful questioning helps

pupils to make thoughtful contributions to discussions. Good planning ensures that pupils progress well, irrespective of their starting points. Many teachers encourage pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning by asking them to discuss issues in pairs or appraise critically each other's work. Homework is often well used to complement classwork. The excellent relationships between pupils and teachers help pupils to enjoy learning. Teachers use their expertise well to prepare older pupils for examinations.

In the small minority of weaker lessons, planning is not matched to the full range of needs. Some teachers talk for too long and don't make learning interesting. Teachers assess pupils well and guidance is clear and helpful, with good use of targets to provide motivation and direction to learning. However, whilst most marking is regular, with helpful comments, some teachers do not pick up misspellings, weak punctuation or grammatical errors.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good because it is broad and relevant to the full range of pupils' needs. Able pupils are stretched by being entered for examinations early and those who struggle are provided with special courses suited to their specific needs. The school provides worthwhile opportunities for some pupils to work off-site in work and college settings and is exploring ways to extend this. The number of vocational courses is increasing and recently established links with other providers are set to provide further variety, including good collaboration with other sixth form providers to ensure a sufficient choice of subjects. Work placements are well established. Personal, social and health education and citizenship successfully cover aspects such as drugs and alcohol abuse. There is satisfactory provision for sex education through the science and religious education curriculum.

The curriculum is enriched with regular trips and activities outside the school day. These include a good range of cultural and sporting pursuits. The school's arts college designation has provided improved opportunities for practical work outside lessons and good links with other schools and community groups, although the cramped facilities in music impede learning for larger classes. The new mathematics and computing college status is creating improved opportunities for pupils to use computers across subjects and in the creation of beneficial smaller class groups in mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good and contribute significantly to the excellent standards achieved by pupils and high standards in their personal development. Pupils and parents are right to speak highly of this aspect of the school's work.

Pupils feel well cared for and, because relationships are so good, the pupils know they can seek help and support whenever they need it. Staff quickly recognise any concerns

regarding the pupils' well-being and child protection arrangements, are good. Nevertheless, the school is right to recognise the need to assess potential risks and implement control measures more rigorously, prior to undertaking day trips out of school. The school has empowered the school council to make changes to the lunch menu to include healthier options. However, excessive queuing sometimes means that pupils are very short of time and so have to choose something quick to eat rather than a balanced and healthy meal.

The school's procedures for tracking the progress that each individual pupil makes are good and ensure that potential underachievement is quickly identified and very good support mechanisms are implemented.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, with some outstanding features, notably the ability of the headteacher and senior leaders to provide clear direction for the school so that all members of the school community know what they are working towards. Senior leaders work very well together. They are a visible and accessible team, and effectively share a sense of common purpose with staff, pupils and parents. Parents and pupils have very positive views about the school, and particularly the strength of the school's leadership and the commitment of staff, feeling that they 'go the extra mile'.

Improvement planning is well focused on raising standards and promoting the pupils' personal development. Leaders at all levels have a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development, and they act decisively. The views of pupils and parents are sought regularly, and action results, for example, in recent improvements to course choices for Year 10.

Subject departments are well led and good support helps middle leaders to improve their skills. Data is used very effectively to monitor performance. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly, but this is not yet linked effectively to how teaching might be improved.

Governors provide good leadership of the school with an effective balance of support and challenge for the school's headteacher and managers. An efficient committee structure supports all areas of the school's work, including good monitoring of standards through the curriculum group. Governors are fully involved in the financial management of the school, which is effective. The school provides good value for money.

The schools' status as a performing arts college and the additional specialism of mathematics and computing has had a positive impact in raising standards. This is seen as a catalyst for change and the introduction of new initiatives.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly to your school and for sharing with us so openly your views about the school. As you know, your parents completed questionnaires which gave us their very positive view of the school and its work. I would like to share with you the findings of the inspection team.

Like you and your parents, we feel you attend a good school and one which has some outstanding features. Your school has many strengths, which include the high standards which you achieve in examinations. Your headteacher and other staff work hard to provide an environment in which you feel safe and enjoy learning. The standards of your behaviour in school and levels of attendance are high. You treat each other politely and with care, and work well together.

Most of the teaching in your school is lively and engaging and you respond enthusiastically to this. You are able to make thoughtful contributions to discussions in response to skilful questioning. Increasingly, you are being encouraged to take more responsibility for your own learning. We have asked your teachers to ensure that even more lessons are like this. Relationships with your teachers are excellent and this helps you to enjoy your learning very much. You make a positive contribution to your school and local community, and raise very generous amounts of money for charity.

Your curriculum is a varied one with an increasing range of vocational opportunities. You appreciate the wide range of activities and visits available to you and you take full advantage of them.

The inspection team wishes you success and happiness in your future lives in Bishop Walsh and beyond.