



St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114328
LEA Durham
Inspection number 279365
Inspection dates 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Paul Hancock HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Consett Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Lanchester
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Durham, County Durham
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01207 520424
Number on roll	1317	Fax number	01207 521114
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Richard Christon
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Maureen Bates

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 24 May 2006 - 25 May 2006	Inspection number 279365
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Bede's is a Roman Catholic school which became a specialist language college in 1998. There are 215 students in the sixth form. The school is located in the north west of Durham, where unemployment is above average. Attendance has risen in the last three years from below to above average. There are fewer students than normally found without English as their first language or from minority ethnic groups. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Students start at the school with above average results and skills.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Bede's is an effective school with a very strong Catholic ethos. It has many strengths in the personal development, care, well-being and support provided for students. The school reached a plateau after the last inspection. GCSE higher grade results remained stationary at a time when results across the country were rising, and standards at Key stage 3 fell, particularly in English and science. The school acknowledges that standards in English and science at Key Stage 3 remain too low. A new headteacher was appointed in 2002 with a strong vision for improvement. Change since then has been substantial and has already made an impact. In 2005 the number of pupils who achieved five or more A* to C grades at GCSE were above average. This represented satisfactory progress when compared to those pupils' starting points. The results of practice tests at Key Stage 3 and GCSE mock examinations this year show the trend of improvement is continuing.

The innovative and very good leadership of the headteacher is driving the school forward. She is well supported by the governing body and the senior management team. Language college targets have been met and links with international communities are strong. The school knows itself well and is right to think that, now that key areas for development are being addressed, its capacity to improve is good. Inspection confirms the school's evaluation that most of the teaching is satisfactory, that there is not yet enough good teaching and, though the quality of leadership by middle managers and coordinators has risen, it is not consistently high enough to sustain further improvement in standards. The school is clearly focused on this issue. Resources are effectively deployed to achieve satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

The school is right to judge achievement, progress and standards in the sixth form as satisfactory. Results show about one third of students gain the highest grades at A level. The results of boys are similar to the national picture. Girls do not do as well, which is against the national trend. The school is tackling this and improving provision. Teaching, leadership, and management are satisfactory and the quality of care for students is high.

Grade: 3

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in English and science at Key Stage 3.
- Significantly improve the proportion of good teaching.
- Consolidate and improve the quality of middle leaders and managers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students start at the school with above average standards and now gain above average GCSE results. This reflects the pattern of students' progress across the school, which is satisfactory when compared to their starting points. The school rightly acknowledges achievement and standards in English and science at Key Stage 3 are not what they should be. Evidence shows standards are rising across the school as a result of the action taken by the headteacher. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress at both Key Stages 3 and 4.

The proportion of pupils at Key Stage 4 gaining higher GCSE grades improved from 58% in 2003 to 62.4% in 2005. The best results were in French, combined science, design and technology, English language and mathematics. Results in history were much lower. Results in the sixth form are satisfactory overall and highest in mathematics, French, and business studies.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good and well regarded by the community, parents and carers. The ethos of the school is founded on very strong Christian values. Students have a good understanding of their place in the world and their responsibilities towards others. This is evident in many ways, particularly in the work of the school council which has raised a lot of money to improve the school environment. Students enjoy learning and have very good attitudes to work and above average attendance. They take part in a wide range of fundraising activities and international events.

Students are strongly encouraged to keep healthy through exercise and diet. Behaviour is very good and the school has successfully shifted the emphasis from exclusion to inclusion, with the number of students excluded falling by 50%.

Moral, social and cultural development is good and spiritual development is excellent. The school's specialist status ensures a good range of cultural opportunities are available. There is a strong moral code. When students start in Year 7, they quickly learn how they should respond to others and to consider their own strengths and weaknesses. Personal development is also good in the sixth form and students are well prepared for their future economic well-being. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and contribute significantly to local and international communities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school rigorously and accurately monitors teaching and learning. It knows that in the main school and the sixth form, most of the teaching is satisfactory with a smaller proportion which is good. The proportion of good teaching is increasing as a result of action taken by the headteacher; the recent appointment and training of many new middle leaders is leading to improvement. Nevertheless, the headteacher knows that the overall quality of teaching is not yet high enough to improve achievement.

The school acknowledges that, in the past, targets were not monitored effectively enough which led to underachievement. Individual target setting has improved and students now know how well they are doing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. Changes in how students are grouped at Key Stage 3 are raising achievement. Students in Years 10 and 11 are increasingly able to mix GCSE and vocational courses and more individual programmes are in place. Students enthusiastically support the good range of extra-curricular activities.

Strong curriculum links with a large group of primary schools and schools abroad have developed as a result of language college status. Provision in and access to information and communication technology (ICT) has also improved since the last inspection.

The personal, social and health education programme contributes well to students' understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles. The programme deals effectively with the programmes of study for citizenship.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided for students are good in the main school and in the sixth form because students' welfare is a key priority and students feel safe. The development of partnerships with a range of outside agencies has created an integrated approach to support. Individual student needs are at the centre of the school's work. Students enjoy their learning and are fully included in the life of the school.

The impact on students' personal development and well-being is particularly effective for those students who are most vulnerable. Child protection procedures are in place, understood and followed. The school takes health and safety issues seriously and risk assessments are in place.

Students are guided well in choosing courses and in preparing for studies beyond school or for future employment. They have targets in all subjects but until recently

targets have not been sufficiently challenging or consistently explicit enough in lessons to help them to know how to improve. This is one of the reasons why standards are not higher at the moment. Guidance and support from staff have improved and now ensures students have individual help when needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and she is well supported by the senior management team. Current action by the senior management team and in the sixth form has led to substantial change at middle management level which has improved quality and is improving standards. Nevertheless, senior management are aware that the overall quality of leadership by middle managers and coordinators is not consistently high enough to sustain the improvement in standards that the school desires.

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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?	3	3
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	3	3
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?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
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?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

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The Students

St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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Durham

County Durham

DH7 ORD

26 May 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for all your help when we inspected your school on 24 and 25 May. We particularly enjoyed hearing your views and listening to you talk about the work you were doing. Please would you pass on my thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires, and inform them that we took all their views into account.

I thought you might like to know what we thought about your school.

You have a very good headteacher who knows what staff need to do to help you learn.

Your school is improving a lot because teachers want to see you do as well as you can.

The school has many strengths in the way it promotes your spiritual and personal development.

You receive high levels of care and support which ensure your safety.

Results are getting better.

Your behaviour and attitudes to learning in school are very good.

It was great to find the school council is listening to your ideas and doing something about them.

Staff work hard and want to make the school even better. To help them, I have asked if they could do three things.

Make the teaching even better than it is now.

Improve your results, particularly in Years 7, 8, and 9.

Continue to improve the quality of middle leaders and managers.

Thank you for being such a credit to yourselves, your parents and carers, and your school.

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector