



St Bede's Catholic High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119792
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280661
Inspection dates 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Jean Kendall HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	St Anne's Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Ormskirk
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Lancashire, L39 4TA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01695 570335
Number on roll	691	Fax number	01695 571686
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Michael Kelly
Date of previous inspection	1 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr Philip Entwistle OBE

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Bede's Catholic High is a popular, voluntary aided mixed comprehensive school. It is smaller than average with 691 pupils on roll. Pupils come from a variety of areas that are rural, semi-rural and urban in character. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Pupils are predominantly White British and no pupils speak English as an additional language. The overall attainment of pupils entering the school in Year 7 is above average. The school also provides for a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved specialist status for visual and performing arts which will be launched in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Bede's provides a good standard of education that is underpinned by a strong Catholic ethos which nurtures pupils' academic and personal development. It provides a welcoming and attractive environment which instils a sense of calm. Pupils are proud of their school and the majority of parents are satisfied with the quality of care and education provided. Teaching is predominantly good, although a small number of teachers use more limited strategies which do not fully engage pupils in their learning. Most teaching builds on the strong achievement and work habits that pupils have when they start in Year 7. Pupils attain high standards and are well prepared for further education or training. The quality of care and support pupils receive is outstanding and pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. Attendance figures and the contribution pupils make to the community are outstanding. The curriculum is good.

Leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team is very impressive; they provide a clear vision and share a strong commitment to continuing school improvement. Rigorous self-evaluation gives governors and leaders at all levels a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses and they have dealt effectively with issues raised in the last inspection report. Subject development plans accurately identify areas for improvement, and some identify actions to raise pupils' standards and achievement even further. The leadership team has formulated plans to deal with weaknesses and has very good capacity to do so. The school uses its funding well and gives very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve pupils more in evaluating their learning so that they know how they can improve their work and make consistently good progress.
- Ensure that creative and innovative teaching strategies are shared regularly across departments.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress across the whole school and GCSE results at Year 11 are consistently high.

When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their standards are above average. They usually make good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 to attain well above average standards in the Year 9 national tests. However, this was not the case in 2005 when a number of pupils made below average progress in relation to their starting points. The school has identified a group of middle and higher ability girls who achieved below expectations and is providing additional support to ensure they achieve their potential. Inspection evidence shows that pupils currently in Years 7 to 9 are making good progress.

At the end of Year 11, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE has been well above average in recent years. The overall progress made by pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good based on their previous performance although there was some variation between subjects in 2005. Pupils made particularly good progress in English, French and history and results were significantly above national averages in these subjects. Pupils made satisfactory progress in mathematics. Achievement could be better in science and religious education (RE), where fewer than expected pupils achieved the higher grades A* and A in 2005. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved very well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and have very positive attitudes to learning. Many take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities which the school provides, notably in the performing arts and sport. Relationships are harmonious and productive and the quality of behaviour is reflected in the very low number of exclusions. Moral, social, spiritual and cultural development are excellent. Recognising the monocultural character of the local environment, the school ensures that pupils have positive experiences of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity; for example, through music, art, drama and RE.

Pupils, parents and carers believe that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively when it does occur. Pupils feel safe in school and know who to approach should they need advice. They understand the way in which diet and physical activity contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Pupils enjoy greatly the opportunities provided to take on responsibility and to represent the school, and appreciate the fact that their voice is listened to and acted upon through the work of the very effective school council. Pupils are prepared very well for later life through good careers guidance. They are very generous in contributing to a wide range of local, national and international charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn well because teaching is predominantly good. Relationships are strong, pupils are keen to learn and their behaviour and attitudes are excellent. In most classes, teachers use effective teaching strategies and work is well matched to the needs of pupils. A small number of teachers use more limited strategies, which do not always engage pupils in active and collaborative learning or develop their ideas and insights fully.

In the most effective lessons learning objectives are linked with assessment, and learning is checked regularly so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do next. In these lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge, give

effective demonstrations and use questioning skilfully to develop pupils' understanding. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils respond enthusiastically and make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make very good progress because teaching is lively and interesting and well matched to their needs

The school recognises where improvement is needed and has formed a teaching and learning group to develop creative approaches. This is beginning to have a positive impact in some subjects. The involvement of pupils in evaluating their work and systems for tracking the pupils' progress are being developed and are used well by some departments. However, these are not yet having a consistently marked impact on pupils' achievement and a few pupils, particularly those in middle ability sets, do not do as well as they could in all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good; it is broad and balanced and offers a suitable choice of GCSE and vocational courses. In addition to English, English literature, mathematics and science, all pupils take GCSE RE. The development of numeracy and literacy is well embedded into the lessons in all departments. Close links with local colleges and industry augment a very good work experience programme. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met very well. There is also a good range of extra curricular and sporting activities, clubs and societies, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the 'Giants' and 'One World' clubs, which greatly enhance the social and cultural opportunities for pupils. There are exciting plans to extend and enrich the curriculum even further from September to reflect the new arts college status.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, support and guidance are outstanding. The school has a very strong commitment to inclusion and its work in this area reflects a Catholic ethos that permeates the work of the school. Very effective procedures ensure that pupils in need of pastoral support are identified early and that appropriate measures are taken to deal with any problems. There are close links with a range of external services, and the school's chaplaincy and counselling services are also used well. Pupils appreciate the quality of the school's programme for helping them to transfer smoothly to St Bede's from their primary schools. The support given to pupils to help them progress to further education or training is excellent; all pupils have continued into further education or training in the last few years. The quality of academic support is good, although not fully consistent in all departments. The senior management know where practice needs improving and have plans of good quality to deal with this issue. Risk assessments are in place. Child protection procedures are thorough, clear and well understood by staff, and pupils know who to turn to if in need. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make very good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school, including its governance, are good. The leadership of the headteacher and deputies is very impressive. Their clear vision is shared well with the staff and creates a common sense of purpose. As a result, there is a strong feeling of optimism and confidence throughout the school which complements its excellent ethos. This is further enhanced by the successful and well managed bid to become a specialist performing arts college.

Senior managers have an accurate view of the school's main strengths and constantly seek further improvements. Good use is made of monitoring and self-evaluation, especially in improving teaching and learning. Performance management is firmly embedded and well linked to teachers' professional development. Departments are encouraged to be self-critical, ambitious and innovative and to share best practice with other colleagues. Subject development plans accurately identify areas for improvement, although some do not give sufficient weight to raising pupils' standards and achievement even further. The use of data for the tracking of pupils' progress requires some refinement. In the identification of areas for improvement, the views of senior staff and of inspectors were closely aligned.

The school is very committed to educational inclusion. Strong pastoral systems provide first-class personal development and contribute very well to an ethos which encourages mutual support and respect. The school promotes very good links between its pupils and the local community. Most parents are satisfied with the communication between school and home, although a few are concerned about the extent to which their views are listened to and addressed.

Governors are experienced, know the school well and provide good support and challenge. The management of finances, staffing and resources is very effective. Overall, St Bede's provides very good value for money and because of its strong leadership and increasingly robust self-evaluation systems, has the capacity to become an outstanding school.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

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

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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To the pupils of

St Bede's Catholic High School

St Anne's Road

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Lancashire

L39 4TA

7 Jun 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making us so welcome. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and your life in school. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and your positive relationships. We particularly liked the way you support and encourage one another. You are keen to learn and this is an important element in the high standards you achieve. It is obvious that you enjoy coming to school and have excellent attendance. Rightly, you can be very proud of the welcoming and attractive environment your school provides.

We found that your school provides a good standard of education and staff are committed to helping each of you fulfil your potential. The care, guidance and support provided by staff are outstanding and help you make excellent progress in your personal development. We found that most of the teaching is good and helps you to make good progress. Those of you with particular needs are very well supported and make very good progress. You enjoy the many additional activities your school offers and are well prepared for further education or training.

Your school has good examination results, but we think it can improve further by giving you more detailed feedback so that you know how to improve your work and achieve even higher grades. The school could also ensure that the creative and collaborative approaches to teaching you enjoy most are used across the school. This will help to make all your lessons interesting by adding more variety to the sorts of activities you do in class.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Jean Kendall HMI

Lead Inspector