



# Blessed William Howard Catholic High School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 124455  
**LEA** Staffordshire  
**Inspection number** 281729  
**Inspection dates** 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Ted Wheatley AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Rowley Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Stafford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Staffordshire ST17 9AB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01785 244236
<b>Number on roll</b>	1026	<b>Fax number</b>	01785 225342
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Chris Scott
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 November 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Frank Lain

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 281729
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Blessed William Howard Catholic High School and Arts College is a specialist mixed average-sized 11–18 comprehensive school. There are more girls than boys and pupils come from mainly Catholic backgrounds. Pupils come from a wide area and a wide range of social backgrounds. A very small number of pupils do not have English as their first language and a small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average and attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. Sixth form provision is shared with other schools in the area. The school is having difficulties recruiting staff, especially for English, religious education and senior management.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education, but has some significant areas in need of improvement. The headteacher and senior staff know where improvements are needed, but have not introduced changes fast enough nor ensured that whole-school issues are dealt with in a consistent manner. Overall, the school has a satisfactory understanding of the areas for improvement.

Standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, but there are small pockets of underachievement, mostly in Years 10 and 11, that the school has started to deal with. In the sixth form, students' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, although a small but significant proportion of pupils misbehave. The school's procedures to deal with this are not used consistently and consequently pupils receive mixed messages of the school's expectations of their behaviour. The school is a safe place and there is some effective, sensitive advice and support offered to pupils, although occasionally pupils with behaviour problems are not always dealt with so sensitively. Overall, pupils are considerate and supportive of each other and while they are willing to take on responsibilities, the opportunities to do so are limited. Pupils' attendance is good. Pupils mostly enjoy school and are satisfactorily prepared for their future lives. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development is satisfactory.

Parents' views of the school are mostly supportive, although some feel that their views are not taken into account, particularly in the ways the school deals with disruptive behaviour.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good lessons that challenge and interest pupils and move at a fast pace. In the few lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory or there are unsatisfactory features (mainly in Years 9, 10 and 11), questioning is not demanding enough, the disruptive behaviour of a small number of pupils is not effectively managed and work does not consistently interest or challenge pupils. The school's efforts to meet the learning needs of all its pupils are broadly satisfactory, although there are gaps where assessment information is not used well enough to match work accurately to pupils' needs.

Overall improvement has been satisfactory since its previous inspection and the school's capacity to improve is sound. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The sixth form is satisfactory. Students enter with average standards. Results in A-level in 2005 were average, showing satisfactory achievement overall. Progress is variable and is best in biology and history, where teaching is good. Most students failed ICT examinations because teaching was inadequate. There has been some, but not enough, improvement in the teaching of ICT. Students' personal development is satisfactory. They enjoy school and behave well. They have good opportunities to contribute to

the community through, for example, the Prefect System. Students' independent study skills are under-developed. Teaching is satisfactory overall and often good. Students' learning is well focused on key concepts and examination technique because teachers' subject knowledge is good overall. However, work is still not challenging enough in ICT. In the good lessons, students make good progress because they are actively involved in learning. In lessons judged only satisfactory, learners rely too much on teachers who over-direct their work. The curriculum is generally good with the exception of provision to develop students' basic ICT skills which is unsatisfactory. The new shared sixth form arrangements offer a very wide choice of academic and vocational subjects and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities to extend students' interests. Students' care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Students are set clear targets for examinations. While progress is regularly reviewed, it is not frequent enough to pick up underachievement sufficiently early. Mentoring of students is well established but not used systematically to support students whose progress is slow. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new head of sixth form has developed good links with other providers to enhance students' aspirations. She is not a member of the senior leadership team, which clearly limits her impact on strategic planning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure senior leaders use the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation better to inform whole-school improvement planning and to increase the pace of change, especially in raising achievement.
- Improve provision for information and communication technology.
- Take more account of the concerns of parents by improving standards of behaviour and ensure behaviour management procedures are applied consistently.
- Improve the quality of teaching by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and by ensuring work is well matched to pupils' individual needs.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils enter the school with broadly average standards. By the end of Year 9 standards are average and a significant minority of pupils reach above-average standards. Overall progress is satisfactory, with a significant small minority of pupils making good progress. In the end-of-Year 9 national tests, results were above the national average in mathematics and science and broadly average in English. Achievement is satisfactory overall and good for a few pupils. The achievement of a small number of pupils is unsatisfactory owing to some weaknesses in teaching, which are slowly being addressed.

GCSE results were above average in 2005, though in English they were not as high as in some other subjects because of staffing difficulties the school is working hard to resolve. Results were particularly good in mathematics, geography and history. They were unsatisfactory in design and technology and ICT. The school has made effective improvements in design and technology, but has yet to implement improvements in ICT. Overall pupils made satisfactory progress, though there were small groups of pupils throughout the year group who did not make enough progress.

Currently, pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, with some unsatisfactory achievement due to weak features of teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and from minority ethnic groups make satisfactory progress.

In the sixth form, standards are broadly average. Examination results have improved in recent years and students make satisfactory progress. Weaknesses identified in art and ICT are being dealt with effectively.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Most pupils are committed to learning, and overall personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Attendance is good, and a recent focus on punctuality has led to improvements. Pupils are willing to contribute to school decision making activities but opportunities for this, such as the school council, are still at an early stage and do not enable pupils to be involved in decision making often enough. They are keen to contribute to the community and when given opportunities, do so responsibly. Sixth form students have taken the initiative and have proved themselves a valuable resource as prefects. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall, but pupils justifiably do not always feel sufficiently valued or listened to. Most pupils are willing to work in lessons even when these are not as interesting as they could be. Often in lessons there is low-level noise and sometimes the behaviour of a few disaffected pupils disrupts the learning. Improving behaviour has been a school priority, but as yet staff are not consistent in their approach, leaving pupils feeling they are sometimes treated unfairly. Exclusion rates are above average and higher than at the time of the previous inspection.

The great majority of pupils enjoy school. They say that bullying is not an issue and most pupils and their parents are satisfied that the school sorts out any incidents. However, this is not the feeling amongst all parents. Generally pupils embrace healthy lifestyles, particularly sport. The school council has begun to tackle the healthy eating agenda and there are now healthy meal options, but some pupils have yet to fully embrace this. Pupils are well equipped to deal with drugs issues because of the school's efforts to raise awareness of the dangers of addictive substances. Pupils work well with others when given the opportunity and the development of skills that contribute to future economic well-being is satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are examples of good teaching in most years and in many subjects. Good practice in mathematics is being used to improve teaching in science. Aspects of inadequate teaching were observed in several subjects and in several year groups, for example, in a few lessons in Years 9, 10 and 11.

In the most effective lessons, teachers present their good subject knowledge with great enthusiasm. Their high expectations and challenging questioning, as seen in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, for example, accelerates pupils' learning. Staff provide engaging activities in well planned and managed lessons, where girls learn as well as boys. Relationships are strong.

In the least effective lessons, for example, in ICT, work is not closely matched to the full range of learners' needs, expectations are too low, and pupils' disruptive behaviour is not effectively managed. In other subjects where teaching is satisfactory overall, there are instances of teachers talking too much and pupils being passive listeners, activities failing to interest pupils, slow pace of lessons and marking that does not consistently inform pupils of how well they are achieving and what they need to do to make further progress. Disruptive behaviour is not always well managed because the school's procedures to manage poor behaviour have not been fully implemented. The presentation of pupils' written work is often untidy.

Monitoring of teaching and learning by subject leaders is established and satisfactory. However, monitoring by senior leaders is too focused on teaching and insufficiently on learning, and does not pick out specific issues as the basis for a whole-school programme to improve teaching.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. A scheme of work for personal, social, health and sex education and citizenship is in place but its implementation and coverage are not monitored. Planning in design and technology is improving but planning for careers education in Years 7 and 8 requires further development.

There is satisfactory provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum. The ratio of computers to students, however, is below the recommended level.

Alternative curriculum provision for disaffected pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and includes Youth Award and Key Skills courses. Work-related learning in Years 10 and 11 is also satisfactory, although only a few vocational subjects are currently offered. There are too few opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 11 to participate in enterprise activities and this limits development of skills to support economic well-being.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved and is satisfactory overall. The Progress Centre for such pupils is an effective initiative where provision is good. Planning by subject teachers, however, for pupils with learning difficulties, and for gifted and talented pupils, is of inconsistent quality.

The impact of the school's Specialist Arts College status is satisfactory. Drama has been introduced in Years 8 and 9. Increasing numbers of pupils chose GCSE music and drama. Although GCSE in performing arts is no longer provided and provision of GCSE dance for 2006 is being reviewed, all pupils in Years 10 and 11 study a non-examination

course in performing arts. Drama, music and dance make good contributions to the extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. There are good links with primary schools for drama, music and dance.

The sixth form curriculum is good, with an outstanding range of academic and vocational subjects. This is due to the very recent development of close links with other sixth form providers. The impact of this initiative has yet to have full effect on students' achievement. Provision for study and ICT skills is, however, weak.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Provision for care, guidance and support is firmly rooted in the Catholic ethos and is satisfactory. Staff are generally committed to high quality care for pupils but occasionally some staff speak to pupils in insensitive ways. Pupils know where they can go for help with personal or academic problems. They are given appropriate targets to help them improve their work, which they find helpful, but departments use different systems, which can be confusing, and some of the targets are too focused on personal development and too little on progress. Pupils this year have found some of the GCSE option information confusing, and some sixth form students felt that although they were helped well with A level choices, some of the advice proved inappropriate when it came to choosing a university course. Vulnerable learners are supported adequately, although the school recognises the opportunity to develop its provision in this area by including learning mentors. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory overall, although the school is not carrying out statutory annual risk assessments. Child protection arrangements are good, although not all staff are clear about who the designated person is.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior managers have a satisfactory understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. The quality of self-evaluation is satisfactory overall and much of the information for this comes from the detailed evaluation carried out by the heads of department. Heads of department have sound procedures to bring about improvements. However, the senior leadership team has been too slow to use this information to identify whole-school issues and to implement plans to ensure they are dealt with consistently across the whole school. For example, identifying common weaknesses in teaching and learning has not led to whole-school approaches to overcome them fast enough. In addition, school policies are not consistently applied. For example, the school management of behaviour is inconsistent. This confuses some pupils, occasionally leads to confrontation between pupils and teachers, interferes with pupils' achievement and raises concerns amongst a minority of parents. When these parents approach the school they do not feel that their opinions are always taken into account or that they are treated seriously.



Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are satisfactory overall but are often not rigorous enough in focusing on the important issues of underachievement and how they can be resolved.

The governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily, provide good support and, where they feel it necessary, challenge for the changes planned by the school. The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
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	3	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Dear Pupils and Students,

Thank you very much for making us feel welcome when we visited your school. You made our time enjoyable and gave us a lot of information, much of it helping us to make our decisions. Many of you spoke to us about the school and helped us when we needed it. We met with representatives of all year groups and others on particular courses. The information you gave us and the comments you made were very helpful.

The best things about your school are:

Most of you behave well and work hard.

You are prepared to take on responsibilities.

The school is a safe, secure place to learn in.

There is some good teaching.

There is a good range of subjects for sixth form students.

We are advising that governors and staff should now:

Make sure that they use all of the information they have about the school to plan improvements and to get on with them quickly, especially to improve achievement.

Improve computer education.

Make sure that the school's policy on dealing with poor behaviour is used in the same way by all staff.

Listen to and take account of the concerns your parents have about the school.

Provide more opportunities for you to take on responsibilities and to be involved in making decisions about what goes on in school.

Improve the quality of teaching to match the most successful already available in mathematics, geography and history.

With best wishes,

Ted Wheatley Lead Inspector