



Bishop Milner Catholic School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103868
Local Authority Dudley
Inspection number 286794
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Anne Taylor HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Burton Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Dudley
Age range of pupils	11–18		DY1 3BY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01384 816600
Number on roll (school)	736	Fax number	01384 816601
Number on roll (6th form)	131	Chair	Roger White
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Headteacher	D A Fagan
Date of previous school inspection	29 October 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	6–7 December 2006	286794

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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

The Bishop Milner Catholic School serves a wide catchment area and around two thirds of its students are from Catholic families. The school provides a Christian education in a Catholic environment where the highest standards of learning, behaviour and appearance are demanded from all students. On entry to the school students' attainment is around the national average. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is low. The proportion of minority ethnic students is high, as is the number whose first language is not English. There is a low proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most students are from families with little prior experience of higher education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good and improving standard of education. A strong Christian ethos permeates the life of the school, standards of behaviour are high and students work hard; however, the level of short-term exclusions was very high in 2005/6 mainly amongst Year 11 students. Good leadership and management focuses strongly on raising standards. Managers know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. There is good capacity to improve. The high quality school building is new and managers have improved standards during several years of rebuilding on the original site.

Achievement and standards are good. National test results in 2006 were above average throughout the school and well above average in Years 7 to 9. In these years students make outstanding progress and in Years 10 and 11 they make good progress. Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form. The school uses information well to set challenging targets and to monitor individual students' progress. However, it has only recently started to use such data to identify specific groups whose progress is less than good, such as more able girls and students of Indian ethnic heritage. As a result, while the school supports individual students well, strategies to raise achievement of specific groups are underdeveloped.

Teaching and learning are good overall and improving because of more rigorous monitoring by school managers. The setting and monitoring of targets with individual students is a particular strength impacting on learning. The school now knows the subjects where the quality of lessons is highest but has not yet established ways of sharing this good practice to ensure consistency across the school, including the sixth form where teaching and learning are satisfactory. In too many lessons a high proportion of students are passive learners.

The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 11 and students have many opportunities to develop their personal and social skills, especially through extra-curricular activities. Students take on extra responsibilities both in the school and the wider community. However, some say they would welcome more involvement in school decision making processes. A significant minority of parents also feel that the school does not take account of their own or their children's views.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Standards are improving and results in 2006 were above average. The standards achieved by boys are above those achieved by girls. The sixth form's outstanding curriculum has contributed to the overall improvement in standards. The school has developed strong partnerships with a range of providers so that, although the sixth form is small in size, there is a wide range of options available for students of all abilities. There are good transition arrangements into the sixth form from local 11–16 secondary schools. The good care, guidance and support of students has enabled them to achieve their target grades

and when students are identified as underachieving an effective system of support is put in place. As a result, the retention of students in the sixth form is very high.

Although the curriculum and support systems are effective in meeting individual needs, achievement by students is satisfactory because teaching and learning in the sixth form are satisfactory. In mathematics, and in art and design, students are underachieving, and in English literature and psychology they achieve well. In satisfactory lessons seen, students are not encouraged to work independently and spend too much time listening to the teacher. In these lessons there are few opportunities for students to engage with their learning and develop their understanding.

Students feel that they benefit from effective processes to induct them into the sixth form and they receive useful guidance about courses and requirements. The support they receive on making their future choices is good and valued by students. There are many opportunities to find out about higher education and to develop the skills necessary for a range of pathways. The number moving on to higher education is high, given that most students do not have experience of this within their families. Students' personal development and well-being are good because they take full advantage of the range of opportunities on offer to help them develop personal skills. A significant number mentor younger students who may be experiencing difficulties with school work. Others train as teaching assistants and gain qualifications by working in classrooms here and in primary schools.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good because there is a clear vision of how the sixth form should develop and this is leading to improved standards. The school has worked very effectively with partners to develop the curriculum and satisfy students' needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop ways of sharing good practice so that the quality of teaching and learning is more consistent and learners engage more effectively in lessons, especially in the sixth form.
- Incorporate the views of students and parents into school decision making processes.
- Develop the use of data so the needs of all groups of students are identified and met.
- Reduce the incidence of exclusions.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement and standards are good. Standards have been improving over the last three years and achievement is outstanding in Years 7 to 9, where national test results in 2006 in English, mathematics and science were well above average. In 2006, students in Year 11 made good progress from entering the school and reached above average

standards in their national tests. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science their progress was satisfactory. Students of lower ability make very good progress; all students achieve five examination passes at GCSE level and there are no students who leave without an examination qualification. The progress of groups of students such as more able girls and students of Indian ethnic heritage, whilst satisfactory, is not yet as good as it could be. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress as a result of the additional support which they receive. In the sixth form, standards are above average and students make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' behaviour in school is very good. They arrive promptly for lessons and are keen to learn. The school, however, has secured high standards of behaviour by applying a 'zero tolerance' policy that involves a very high number of short-term exclusions. There were no permanent exclusions in 2005/6. In January 2006 the school introduced a behaviour management system which rewards good behaviour as well as sanctioning poor behaviour and students speak highly of this. Students' attendance at school has fallen in the past two years to around the national rate. Students are given many opportunities to grow into mature adults through their lessons, assemblies and by taking part in the many activities provided outside lessons. In their discussion of moral issues, students understand clearly what is right and what is wrong.

The school council has been reformed in the past 18 months and some changes have been made as a result of its suggestions; however, it has yet to meet this academic year. Some students feel that the school could value their contribution more, a view also expressed by some parents. Students feel safe in school. Action is taken to prevent bullying. They respond well to encouragement to eat healthily and to participate in sporting activities. The school prepares students well for their future economic well-being, with particular success in developing their literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are good overall and satisfactory in the sixth form. Lessons are well planned and clear objectives and outcomes are set. Students behave well in lessons and show a positive attitude to their work; however, many are not actively involved in lessons. Their relationships with their peers and teachers are good. Teaching is good in history, geography, English and science and in many lessons a range of opportunities is planned for students to do the work, building skilfully on their previous learning. However, there is insufficient sharing of good practice across the school. The new

school building is purpose built, the learning environment is good, classrooms are well equipped and there is good use of multimedia projectors.

The school has good information about the individual needs of students and this is available to class teachers in each lesson. Specific targets are set in most subjects and closely monitored by subject teachers. The school management system tracks progress across subjects and academic support is well targeted.

Within the last 18 months school managers have started to monitor the quality of teaching and learning more systematically through the observation of lessons and also by sampling students' targets and marked work. This is starting to bring about improvement in Years 7 to 11. Monitoring of the quality of lessons in the sixth form has commenced this year. Whilst development points are agreed individually with observed members of staff, the school does not use the outcomes of observations to identify common issues and arrange staff development for groups of teachers. The school is focusing attention on the quality of assessment to further improve consistency and quality of feedback to students. It has audited current practice and has a very accurate view of its areas of strength.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is good overall and outstanding in the sixth form. There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities which enable learners to develop personal and social skills. Residential opportunities are set up for many students, including all Year 7 students, and these help embed the ethos of the school and foster mutual respect. The enrichment week in July enables a wide range of activities to take place in term time, including work experience placements for Year 10 students, local visits and external speakers. Several students have been trained as peer mediators and support students across the school.

In Years 10 and 11 most students follow a traditional academic curriculum and achieve at least as well as expected; however, some would welcome the opportunity for a more practical, vocational curriculum prior to the sixth form. Enterprise skills are underdeveloped. The breadth of the Key Stage 4 curriculum is recognised as an action point in the school development plan.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school seeks to integrate all students, whatever their learning needs, at the earliest opportunity and has good transition arrangements with many primary schools. Comprehensive testing informs teachers of students' prior attainment and enables the school to put in place an extensive structure of support through class organisation, provision of additional teaching, and support from learning assistants and mentors

when appropriate. Students' progress in learning is monitored through targets and a regular review of progress being made. If students are slipping behind they are quickly identified and intervention started before too much time is lost. Students who are identified as being gifted and talented are supported through a range of measures to help them achieve their potential. Students speak highly of the value of the care and guidance that they receive at all stages. The good care and support offered by the school contributes to the progress students make and it especially helps those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve. However, the fact that the school has only recently started to analyse data on progress by categories such as gender or ethnicity means that it cannot always be sure that such groups are being fully supported in making the progress that they should be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher sets high expectations and standards and has ensured that the school provides a safe environment where most students make good progress. The newly enlarged senior leadership team provides clear direction to staff and students alike, and all know what is expected of them. However, school leaders are overgenerous in their judgement on the quality of provision. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and good management has ensured that disruptions to learning have been minimised throughout a lengthy period of rebuilding. Resources are deployed effectively.

Middle leadership is good. Heads of department are clearly accountable for the success of their subject areas and most monitor and evaluate achievement and the quality of learning effectively. Senior managers support and coach middle managers when required. The school is developing the specialism of science and the head of science has shown strong leadership in enriching the curriculum and sharing good practice across the science team.

Governance is satisfactory. All areas for development from the previous inspection have been met. However, governors are not rigorous in their role of monitoring the progress of the school and do not challenge reports from the headteacher sufficiently.

The school has good links with external agencies, including the Catholic Church, to support the strong Christian ethos that permeates the life of the 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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	3	
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	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
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 to below 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	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

This letter is, first, to thank you for welcoming us to your school on our recent visit and for telling us your views. Second, it is to tell you that we judged your school to be good overall and satisfactory in the sixth form.

These are the things we consider to be the main strengths of your school:

- Almost all of you make good or better progress in your studies.
- Your school is well managed.
- You are very pleasant, behave well, work hard and feel safe.
- The activities you can join outside lessons are especially good.
- You and your parents tell us you enjoy school.

- There are just a few things that need to be better. Please think carefully about them and play your part in improving your school:
- Sometimes teaching could be even better and you could participate more actively in lessons, particularly in the sixth form.
- We have asked the school to take more account of your views and those of your parents.
- There should not need to be as many temporary exclusions for poor behaviour.
- We have asked the school to make even better use of the information it has about you to help you all make good or better progress.

We wish you well for the future and hope you are successful in whatever you want to do.