



# Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 110107  
**Local Authority** Reading  
**Inspection number** 288592  
**Inspection dates** 13–14 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Peter Sanderson HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Fawley Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Southcote
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		Reading RG30 3EP
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01189 574730
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	849	<b>Fax number</b>	01189 568150
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	113		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Bernard Jennings
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Barras
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 October 2002		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	13–14 September 2006	288592

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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**

Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School is a popular, slightly smaller than average comprehensive school that provides education for mainly Catholic children. The majority of the rest come from other Christian denominations. There are more students from minority ethnic groups than found in most schools although the proportion whose first language is not English is below the national average. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is similar to most schools. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is also broadly average and the school has a dedicated Asperger resource centre for 15 students. The school is a specialist Performing Arts College.

The school was led by the deputy headteacher during the inspection due to the temporary absence of the headteacher.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School provides students with a satisfactory education. This view is shared by the school. Students reach average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 9, although standards in science are below average. Standards at the end of Year 11 have improved rapidly during the past two years and are now at the national average. However, standards in mathematics have not risen as quickly as in other subjects and are below average. Overall, students make satisfactory progress in their learning during Years 7 to 11. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The senior leadership team ensures that the school has a welcoming, inclusive ethos based on Christian values. In recent years there has been a clearer focus on monitoring and improving teaching and learning. The overall quality of teaching across the school is satisfactory, although there is variation between subjects. The school has developed good systems for setting targets and tracking student progress. However, the systems are new and there are inconsistencies in the use of this assessment information across the school to improve learning. School self-evaluation is accurate and the senior leadership team recognise where the school needs to make improvements as well as its strengths.

The school is successful in promoting students' personal development and well being and it is well respected by its students, parents and the wider community. There is an orderly and calm environment for learning and behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Students enjoy their time in school. The quality of care of students is good, particularly for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school curriculum is satisfactory. The school's recent achievement of performing arts status has enabled it to develop its curriculum and range of enrichment activities, however there is a limited number of vocational courses open to students in Years 10 and 11.

Improving achievement in Years 10 and 11, and a clear school improvement plan that effectively addresses key areas in need of development, demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to improve.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors judge that the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. This is a view shared by the school. Teaching is satisfactory leading to students making satisfactory progress. Teachers know students well, and the personal development of students is good. A range of AS and A level courses is offered within the school and this is extended by the involvement in consortium arrangements with local schools and a college. The range of vocational courses offered is limited. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.

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

- Improve standards in science by the end of year 9 and mathematics by the end of Year 11
- Improve teaching so that all is as good as the best
- Ensure greater consistency in the use of assessment information to improve learning across the school
- Extend the range of vocational courses available to students in Years 10 to 13.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Students enter the school with average standards although there is slight variation from year to year. During the first three years at the school students make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. Progress in science during this period is less than expected. The school is aware of this issue and has taken actions, that are beginning to be effective, to improve teaching and achievement.

Standards at the end of Year 11 have risen rapidly during the past two years. The 2006 examination results indicate that students are now reaching average standards and make satisfactory progress during Years 10 and 11. However, the rate of improvement in mathematics is below that of other subjects and standards remain below the national average. All groups of students make satisfactory progress throughout their time at the school, and those with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress.

Students with a wide range of abilities are admitted into the sixth form. The standards achieved in post-16 examinations are below the national average, although student progress is satisfactory. There was a fall in Year 12 AS level results in 2006 mainly due to some students being given inappropriate advice as to the courses they should follow. The school is aware of this issue and has revised the guidance that students are given.

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

### **Grade: 2**

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

Students' personal development is good. The school's 'gospel values' are reflected in an ethos in which students are polite and show respect for each other. Great emphasis is placed on raising students' self esteem. The school's commitment to racial harmony is evident in the behaviour of the students, which is good both in and outside of lessons. Students enjoy their education, have good attitudes to learning, and are positive when speaking about the school. The personal, social and health education curriculum is very good. Students' social, moral and spiritual development is good. Cultural development is satisfactory. Although subjects such as religious education

are used to underpin values of respect and tolerance, opportunities to explore the diversity of cultures that are found in our society are not always fully explored.

Attendance is average and improving. Students feel safe in school and are encouraged to report incidents of bullying which are effectively dealt with. Sixth formers also provide a mentoring system to support students in the lower school. The school has been awarded the Healthy Schools Silver award and a healthy schools forum seeks to encourage students to adopt a positive attitude towards healthy lifestyles. Students are involved in a large number of charitable events, such as raising funds to support a building project in Africa.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. During the inspection many examples of good practice were seen as well as a small amount which was inadequate. Over the last year the monitoring of teaching has been systematic and effective, aiming to improve standards by raising the quality of teaching to levels of the best. Teachers plan well using clear learning objectives. In the best lessons a range of activities that engage and motivate students is used and the pace of learning is good. Students' enjoyment and understanding is enhanced by the effective use of interactive whiteboards, for example to show how caves and stacks are formed in geography. Relationships are good in most lessons although there are too few opportunities for students to use initiative and take responsibility for their own learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The school offers a curriculum that meets the needs of most students. Through consortium arrangements with other institutions an increasing number of older students are able to access a range of vocational courses. The school recognises the need to expand its vocational provision and has plans to offer more courses internally for Years 10 and 11 and further develop its consortium arrangements for Years 12 and 13

Linked to acquiring the Quality Mark from the Basic Skills Agency the school has effectively targeted support for GCSE students leading to improving standards.

The achievement of specialist school status in the performing arts has enabled the school to include dance for all students in Years 7 and 8, and there are increased enrichment activities in the performing arts such as the recent 'Bollywood' production. The school offers a satisfactory range of after school clubs and activities.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The care provided for students is good with some outstanding features. Teachers know students well and show a high level of commitment to meeting individual needs. As a result students have confidence that staff will deal with any problems that might arise. Child protection procedures are in place and proper attention is paid to health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those in public care is very good. The Bartimaeus area and the Asperger resources centre provide outstanding support for students at risk. The school also works well with a range of external agencies to meet their needs. This ensures that these students make good progress.

The school is developing good procedures for the regular assessment of students and the tracking of their progress against challenging targets. However, the use of this assessment information to improve the learning of students is not yet consistent across the school. The majority of parents are positive about the school and confirm the view that students are well cared for, guided and supported. In the main school, good information and advice is available when curriculum choices are made.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior leadership team is effective and shares a clear vision for the school which is based on developing Christian values and improving achievement. Recent appointments to the senior leadership team have made a significant contribution to developing the school's processes of monitoring and self evaluation. These systems increasingly focus on the quality of students' achievements rather than on processes and have accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. Key priorities for improvement have been identified and are addressed through a clear and well-written improvement plan. Strategies for ensuring that students make appropriate progress are still developing but have already resulted in improved achievement in Years 10 and 11.

Procedures for monitoring teaching and learning have recently been developed and are now good. Arrangements for sharing good practice within the school are good and have included, for example, developing staff expertise in the use of assessment and the teaching of gifted and talented students. These systems are improving the quality of teaching and learning, however, variation across the school still remains.

Governors are supportive of the school. They have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are actively involved in helping the school to improve. Efficient use is made of resources and financial systems are now secure following a period of significant overspend.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### 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?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3
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	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	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	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
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

During the recent inspection, we met and talked with many of you, sat in on some of your lessons and looked at work you had done. We would like to thank you for the help you gave us. Now that we have finished the inspection I am writing to tell you of our findings.

We thought your school was satisfactory overall with areas that are good. The following points are what we found to be the school's key strengths and weaknesses:

- the school has a welcoming Christian ethos in which all of you are well cared for and supported.
- your relationship with each other and with teachers is good.
- you show good attitudes to learning and you behave well in lessons and around the school.
- both you and your parents speak positively about the school.
- the progress you make in your learning during Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory.
- your headteacher and senior teachers know the school well and they have good plans in place to make it even better.
- the school's award of specialist school status in the performing arts is already helping to bring about changes that will benefit you.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements:

- improve the standards you achieve in science by the end of Year 9 and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- many of your lessons have a good range of activities that engage and motivate you and are pitched at the right level so that you learn well. This is not always the case and so we have asked the school to ensure that all your lessons are as good as the best.
- the school has good systems in place to set you targets and monitor your progress. Many of you know your targets, how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve. This is not always the case and so we have asked the school to make sure that all of you know this information.
- extend the range of vocational courses on offer to you all in Years 10 to 13.

Thank you again and I wish you all good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Sanderson

Her Majesty's Inspector