

Bishop Challoner Catholic Secondary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116478
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	290546
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2007
Reporting inspector	William Geoffrey Robson

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	632
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr T Cullinane
Headteacher	Mr A Corish
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2001
School address	St Michael's Road Basingstoke RG22 6SR
Telephone number	01256 462661
Fax number	01256 810359

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bishop Challoner School is a smaller than average secondary school. As a Catholic school it serves a wide area and about a quarter of its students travel from outside the local area. It is a specialist school for mathematics and computing. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds, with almost one in ten from a range of minority ethnic groups. There are 31 students who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of students identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is close to the national average. Very few students are eligible for free school meals.

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's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. There are, however, several very good aspects of its work. In particular, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students grow in confidence and self-esteem, developing a mature understanding of their emotions, their own faith and those of other cultures and traditions. Parents agree, saying, 'Teachers have created an environment of respect so that everyone works together to get the best out of their day.' As a result, students contribute enthusiastically to their own community through the student council and raise impressive funds for several charities. Other aspects of students' personal development are good. Their high attendance shows their enjoyment of school, although several say that they would like more opportunity to take responsibility in some lessons. They feel safe and clearly trust staff to deal effectively with any occasional incidents of bullying. The good take up of extra-curricular sports activities helps students to develop healthy lifestyles. The school's good emphasis on work related learning and careers education ensures that students are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

During the last eighteen months, the senior management team has been hampered by the absence through illness of an assistant headteacher. The headteacher provides good leadership and a clear direction for the school. However, despite the recent delegation of some management responsibilities, he and the deputy headteacher carry a very heavy workload. As a result, an important element of self-evaluation has not been developed fully. Self-evaluation is satisfactory overall but available data from the assessment of students' work is not used rigorously enough to track their progress and evaluate achievement. By comparison with the strong support for students' personal development, academic guidance is weak. Some students are not sure about their target grades or how well they are progressing towards them. Until recently, teachers' use of assessment in lessons was also inconsistent. As a result, GCSE results fell considerably last year, especially in English. Overall standards are above average and students' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory although there are strong aspects to it. Learning and achievement are improving as the school begins to develop its assessment and monitoring procedures. There are particular strengths in teachers' good subject knowledge, questioning techniques and the excellent relationships that they establish with students. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The headteacher is introducing several appropriate initiatives to raise achievement and middle managers are responding well to the opportunity to take more responsibility.

The impact of the school's specialist status is satisfactory. It has resulted in an increased range of courses in mathematics and all students now enter an examination in information and communication technology (ICT). The school has found it difficult to make links with local businesses to the extent that it would like and involvement with the local community is too limited.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement by ensuring students know their targets for all subjects and how well they are progressing towards them.
- Use available data about students' achievement to evaluate the school's work more rigorously.
- Develop links with the local community to extend opportunities for students' learning in the school's specialist subjects.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter the school with above average levels of attainment. Results in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 are consistently above average. GCSE results have been well above average in recent years. However, in 2006, standards fell from this high level. GCSE results were still above average and the school met the targets that were set for its status as a specialist school. However, the decline by comparison with previous years was particularly noticeable in English, where progress during Years 10 and 11 was inadequate. The senior management team has responded to this fall in standards by, for example, improving staffing levels for teaching English. Teachers are improving their use of assessment but the effect of this is on results remains to be seen. Overall standards are above average and achievement is satisfactory. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress. The achievement of high attaining students is also satisfactory but many did particularly well in history last year. Students who are at an early stage of learning English make satisfactory progress because of the support that they receive from teaching assistants in lessons and after school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Overall, personal development is good with some outstanding features. Students are full of praise for their school. They clearly enjoy learning and attendance levels are well above national averages. The level of exclusions is low. Most students act very responsibly. Behaviour round the school and in lessons is very good for the great majority of students. They feel that occasional incidents of bullying are dealt with fairly and they feel secure because of the excellent support from teaching and ancillary staff.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, with spiritual and moral development being particular strengths. Students fully support the school's Catholic ethos and, by Year 10, are able to discuss faith and emotions in a very mature manner. Their knowledge of other faiths and cultures is also very secure and events, such as Arts Week, give students good opportunities to show their awareness of cultural, health and environmental issues.

Students know how to be healthy and safe. They participate willingly in sports day and a good range of physical activities. Some say that they would like the opportunity to eat healthier food than that which is available in the canteen. Students show very good skills in working with others, although some teachers do not give them enough opportunities to do so in lessons. The school council is effective and students feel their opinions are acted upon. They gain confidence and new skills through the range of visits and extra-curricular activities available and from well planned work experience. They are justifiably proud of their extensive charity and community work. They have secure academic and practical skills and are well prepared for progressing to college or employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and are improving. There are several good features within teaching which are becoming more consistent. Regular monitoring of lessons by managers involves valuable feedback to teachers and has contributed to improvement, especially in the use of assessment. For example, in subjects such as history and mathematics, assessment data is used very well to plan work for students of different abilities. Other teachers are developing this skill well, although it is still less consistent in English lessons. Where teachers make the specific learning intentions clear, students get down to work quickly and learn well, because they know what is expected of them. As a result, students' learning, in lessons seen during the inspection was good, but the results of this remain to be seen in terms of achievement over time. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan a variety of activities and this contributes to students' enjoyment of their lessons. Relationships are very positive in lessons; students want to get involved and learn. Behaviour is very good, reflecting students' positive attitudes and also some skilled student management by teachers. Good questioning by teachers helps challenge students well, and in the best lessons there are various opportunities for student discussions. However, some teachers dominate the discussion too much and prevent students from developing their own ideas. Teaching assistants are made aware of the lesson objectives and provide effective support for students with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. There are some strong features. In particular, there is a very good range of activities for students outside the classroom. For example, students participate willingly in sport, trips, after school GCSE Spanish, art, textiles and the opportunity to extend their ICT to a full GCSE. Music is a very strong feature of the life of the school. Provision for citizenship and work-related learning is good and prepares students well for life after school. Currently, most students gather an appropriate range of GCSE qualifications that enables almost all to enter further education or training. A few students in Years 10 and 11 follow a young apprenticeship scheme at the local college. However, other college link courses are no longer available for current Year 10 students. As a result, a few lower attaining students have insufficient opportunity to follow alternative courses to meet their needs.

As part of the school's specialist status, Year 10 students follow extra courses in statistics or additional mathematics. ICT provision has been extended so that all students gain an examination entry. However, there is insufficient support from other subjects for the school's specialist areas. The school shares its expertise in these subjects with a few primary schools but the range of involvement outside the school community is too limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Overall care, guidance and support are satisfactory. However, some aspects are very strong. Several parents say that one of the school's strengths is that children are treated with respect, as individuals. Year heads, form tutors and the school's matron provide excellent support and advice for students' personal development. Along with close links with outside agencies, this

ensures a very good quality of student welfare. Students appreciate the quality and range of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Careers education and guidance are particular strengths and ensure that students are well prepared for the next stage of education or for the work place. Pastoral systems are well planned and monitored. All requirements for care, health and safety and monitoring attendance are met and management of this is clearly secure. The school provides well for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, especially through the effective use of support in English classes.

Teachers give students sound general advice on how to improve their work but their use of academic data is inconsistent. Target setting is not well enough established. For example, Year 7 can talk eloquently about the levels they gained in primary school but are not clear about their new targets. This lack of consistency in the use of assessment means that some students are not challenged or supported to achieve as well as they could. Students and their parents value the recently introduced review days to discuss personal development in Year 7 but students are still unsure about their academic progress and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the headteacher is good. He has established a very clear and appropriate direction for school improvement. The extra workload caused by the temporary absence of an assistant headteacher partly explains why assessment data is not being used effectively to evaluate performance. However, the headteacher and his deputy, who now constitute the senior management team, have successfully established a wide range of monitoring and evaluation procedures. These include rigorous subject reviews which are already improving, for example, the planning for ICT in physical education lessons. The leadership and management structure has been developed, so as to distribute responsibility more widely. Three newly appointed 'Directors of Learning' are introducing new initiatives to raise achievement. Examples are improved links with primary schools, the development of study skill programmes in Years 10 and 11, and the provision of support programmes for students with learning difficulties in Year 9. The headteacher realises that these managers have insufficient opportunities to gain a whole-school view and is addressing this issue.

Heads of department are increasingly accountable for the performance of teachers and students in their subjects. They are fully involved in development planning, although some of their improvement targets are insufficiently precise and make measurement of progress difficult. Governors are very supportive of the school's work but are less active in questioning and challenging the school to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
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	1
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	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
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

10 July 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Bishop Challoner Catholic Secondary School, Basingstoke, RG22 6SR

The inspection team really enjoyed visiting your school recently and we would like to thank you for your warm welcome. We were very impressed by the way you expressed yourselves so confidently and by the way you obviously get on very well with your teachers and each other. You are keen to take responsibility and contribute to the community, both in school and outside. Our main finding is that the school provides you with a satisfactory education. There are also some very strong features.

The best things about the school are that:

- you make outstanding progress in your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- you get on very well with your teachers and each other
- you respond very well to the very good care and support that the school provides for your personal development
- you reach above average standards in your work.

To improve your school further we have asked the staff to do three things:

- to help you to achieve better results by making sure you know your targets for all subjects and how well you are progressing towards them
- to use information about your achievement and progress to evaluate the school's work more rigorously
- to develop links with the local community to extend your opportunities to learn mathematics and ICT.

Teachers know what needs to be done and have plans to do them. We are sure that you will help them to help you, because that is one of the best things about your school!

With very best wishes for your future.

Bill Robson

Lead inspector