

# Bennett Memorial Diocesan School

Inspection report - amended

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118841
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	291270
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robin Hammerton 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 category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1370
6th form	280
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Dench
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ian Bauckham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 February 2003
<b>School address</b>	Culverden Down Tunbridge Wells TN4 9SH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 521595
<b>Fax number</b>	01892 514424

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<b>Age group</b>	11-18
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 April 2007
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## **Amended Report Addendum**

ofsted request due to complaint

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Bennett is a large and oversubscribed Church of England comprehensive school, within a selective area. It has specialist technology status. Most students are admitted through their parents' church affiliation. They come from the full ability range, though only about half the national average proportion of students is identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) and pupils who had lower attainment at the end of primary school are under-represented at Bennett. Consequently, overall attainment at the start of Year 7 is above average. A small percentage of students come from minority ethnic groups and a very small group speak English as an additional language.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school which provides good value for public money and has a number of significant strengths. It is steadily improving. GCSE standards, and those by Year 9, are very high. Consistently good teaching throughout Years 7 to 11 within a very supportive and caring Christian environment enables all students, including those with LDD, to make very good progress. This rate of progress is not, however, maintained consistently in the sixth form, where standards in 2006 were average at A2 level, though better than average at AS level. The school, through its tracking of students' progress, anticipates some improvement in 2007.

Students are known well by staff and cared for admirably. They are happy to say that staff will 'go the extra mile' for them. Personal development and well-being are good and, in some respects, outstanding. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are outstanding. Behaviour and attendance are good.

The curriculum is good and motivates students greatly in Key Stages 3 and 4. It is evaluated and developed effectively. There are some vocational options in Key Stage 4 and the school rightly plans to add more. Although teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11, students are sometimes too passive in lessons because they are given too few good opportunities to contribute their ideas, work collaboratively, or share in the assessment of their progress.

The headteacher has established efficient management arrangements, enabling some good improvements and the smooth and happy running of the school. Although the school development plan is effective in many areas, some key whole-school improvements, which might help make the school outstanding, are progressing too slowly. This is because, despite useful training, exactly what is expected of staff is not planned or articulated sufficiently clearly by senior leaders. The monitoring of progress is not clearly or rigorously enough targeted to make sure the improvements happen successfully, and in well defined timescales, across the school.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The sixth form is satisfactory, improving and well managed. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall, with generally good outcomes at AS level. Results in 2006 varied between subjects, with the different quality of teaching in these subjects being a significant factor. The school has taken positive action to deal with this and expects improved results in 2007. Inspection evidence supports this view but also indicates that there remains room for improvement in teaching in some of the very small groups. Sometimes only one or two students have chosen a subject. The existence of these groups demonstrates the school's genuine commitment to the students involved but is expensive in relation to the outcomes achieved and these students' opportunities to discuss and share ideas with others are limited.

Sixth form students receive outstanding academic and personal support and guidance from staff, which they really appreciate, as well as high levels of individual attention. They also enjoy and benefit from the enrichment programme. Younger students look forward to joining the sixth form.

An impressive range of academic A-level courses is offered, alongside a very limited number of more work-related or lower level options. This balance meets most needs but prevents some more vulnerable or lower attaining students, including some with LDD, from entering the sixth

form at Bennett. This can cause disappointment as these students have to seek provision elsewhere. It also restricts options for others. The school has prudently begun to develop partnerships with some other local schools and providers, which might enable some of the courses with smaller numbers of students to be provided more effectively as well as enhance the range of vocational options and pathways. However, this is at a very early stage.

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

- Improve students' opportunities to make an active contribution in lessons and to evaluate for themselves how well they are learning.
- Increase the range of vocational opportunities and pathways in Key Stage 4 and, especially, the sixth form.
- Sharpen the focus of whole-school improvement initiatives so that the planning, implementation and evaluation of these have a greater and faster impact for the students.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

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

From the overall above average starting point, students of all abilities make very good progress throughout Key Stage 3 and standards by Year 9 are exceptionally high, especially in English and mathematics. Consistently good progress continues in Key Stage 4 and most students gain at least five good passes at GCSE, usually including English and mathematics. In 2006, all students gained at least one qualification. This represents consistently very good achievement which the school expects at least to maintain in 2007. Standards and achievement fluctuate somewhat from year to year but continue to improve overall with most students achieving challenging targets. There are some areas for improvement. Some subjects have lower results than most others, which the school is working effectively to address, and students' work is not always carefully enough presented.

In the sixth form, attainment in 2006 at A2 level was broadly average, representing satisfactory progress by the students. At AS level, standards were above average overall. In the very small number of vocational subjects offered, standards were consistently above average.

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

### **Grade: 2**

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

A strong, caring Christian ethos pervades the school, providing a happy atmosphere in which students thrive. Parents are particularly pleased with this. Students' spiritual and moral development is exceptionally strong. They make an outstanding contribution to the local and wider community, raising money for many charities and doing voluntary work. There is a delightful commitment to serving others with sixth formers willingly helping younger students in lessons, for example. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, recently built up in Year 10, is beginning to bring some real benefits to many students' personal development.

Students demonstrate excellent social skills, encouraging each other well. Relationships between them and staff are positive and trusting. Behaviour is generally good, although the headteacher has made a small but significant number of recent exclusions. Some parents and students say disruptive behaviour impedes a few lessons. Students behave very safely in school and when

catching buses home. They indicate there is hardly any bullying. Attendance is good, though too many students arrive late to school and lessons. Students know about healthy eating from lessons but many eat unhealthy snacks, often purchased from the school canteen. This gives them a confusing mixed message. However, most enjoy healthy physical activities in and outside lessons. They are well prepared for their future lives, having strong basic skills, confidence and sensitivity. Opportunities to take responsibility, express their views and work collaboratively are restricted, however, by the somewhat limited provision in these areas. For example, the school council is underdeveloped with its agenda and meetings being heavily regulated by staff.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching and learning are consistently good in Years 7 to 11. Teachers communicate their expert subject knowledge clearly. Lessons are well paced and structured. Learning objectives are outlined helpfully with instructions and guidance clearly provided by staff. Tasks are interesting, relevant and often supported by good resources. Interactive whiteboards are frequently used, though not always to their full potential. Students with LDD are included well by teachers, and teaching assistants when present, ensuring their good progress. However, their individual learning needs are not always well enough addressed.

Students' attitudes to learning are good and they are keen to take part actively in class. However, teachers often provide too few good opportunities for students to contribute and explore their ideas, evaluate how well they have done or undertake group or paired work. Students then become more passive, reducing their engagement.

In the sixth form, many of the same strengths and areas for development exist but the quality of teaching is less consistent and is satisfactory, though improving.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

At Key Stage 3 the school provides a very good, broad curriculum which is currently being thoughtfully improved. Setting is well used to enhance students' progress.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum is good, leading to high standards and preparing students well for their future. It is enhanced by vocational courses. As in Years 7 to 9, technology has an important and successful place which befits the specialist status. Religious education is given high status and this contributes well to students' personal development.

In the sixth form, the subjects offered benefit most students but the curriculum is satisfactory overall because too few vocational or applied pathways are available and, as a result, a significant minority of students' needs are not well met.

The school makes strong provision for extra-curricular and enrichment activities in all year groups, which students really appreciate and enjoy. The wide variety of good quality and popular activities significantly enhances learning and well-being.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Bennett is an especially caring school community and this is one of the school's most significant strengths. Staff, including the school chaplain, know the students very well and are happy to help them in any possible way. Pastoral systems are well organised, with guidance about options, careers or personal issues readily available. Appropriate safeguarding, child protection and risk assessment procedures are clearly established. In the sixth form, the quality of care and guidance is outstanding. Students really appreciate the excellent support and feedback they receive.

In Years 7 to 11, guidance and support are good rather than outstanding because students are not fully aware of their personal targets, what they need to do to reach them and how well they are doing. The quality of feedback to them through teachers' marking is inconsistent. When marking is not done thoroughly enough it tends to lead to some lack of pride in work. Students do not contribute actively enough to the assessment of their own learning.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The headteacher successfully ensures that the highly valued and appreciated Christian ethos of the school is maintained and developed. With the leadership team, he effectively nurtures and involves the staff, whose development and well-being are given high priority, as are the training and good induction of new teachers. Organisational systems are strong. Managers have well defined roles, lines of accountability are clear and there are good procedures for information sharing, policy development and performance management. Subject department leaders are supported and empowered well. For example, the head of modern foreign languages is bringing about good and needed improvements.

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. It is accurate in identifying many areas of strength and those needing improvement, often in particular departments. The positive data about students' academic progress understandably carries significant weight in self-evaluation but sometimes too little account is taken of other important information. For example, rigorous summary evaluations of key areas such as the overall strengths and weaknesses of teaching, or the quality of provision for LDD students across the school, are not effectively brought together. This makes further improvement harder to achieve. The leadership and planning of some key whole-school development initiatives do not make clear enough what specific actions staff must take, and in what timescales, to achieve the overall goals. Nor do they ensure the well targeted follow up needed, through rigorous monitoring and support, to assure consistent improvement across the school.

The school development plan, therefore, has limitations. Nevertheless, it is a living document which shows priorities concisely. It is followed faithfully and discussed regularly, ensuring the school moves forward progressively. With its strong organisational systems, the school has good capacity to improve further. Despite a recent survey of their views, a significant number of parents consider the school does not take enough account of their suggestions and any concerns they have.

The governing body is committed, supportive and suitably organised, covering all its statutory duties, and overseeing planning for the major building work about to start. It assures the school's Christian ethos. However, it does not challenge the school or hold it to account robustly enough.



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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>	<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>	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	3
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

<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	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	1

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	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

April 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Bennett Memorial Diocesan School, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9SH

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to thank you for the great help you gave us when we visited, and to tell you what we found out about your school. We were not in the school for long but we really enjoyed meeting quite a few of you, and discussing the school with you, as well as seeing some lessons and other activities. You were all a great credit to yourselves and your school – well done!

We found that your school is good and improving. You really seem to enjoy being there, which is not surprising as it is clearly an exceptionally friendly and caring place. You do a great deal to make that true, as do the staff. It was great to see how well you help and look after each other. In Year 9 tests and at GCSE most of you get really good results. You make very good progress because the teaching is constantly good and you work hard and join in well. Sometimes, some of you could present your work a little more carefully and tidily. Work on that as it is important! In the sixth form, results are also fairly good but there is some room for improvement.

We have tried to help the school get better still by making three main recommendations. The first one is to ask your teachers sometimes to give you better opportunities to take part actively in lessons. This could involve having more chances to contribute your ideas, doing additional collaborative work, and working out more for yourselves how well you are getting on. It should help make the lessons more stimulating and enable you to learn in even more depth. Secondly, some of you do not find the courses that you want to do in the sixth form, and sometimes in Key Stage 4. So we are asking the school to think about how it can increase the range of subjects and pathways. As it happens, there is a national initiative just under way to try to improve the opportunities for all 14 to 19 year olds. Thirdly, when the school is working to improve something, we are asking the leadership team to discuss precisely with staff what needs to be done, and then check very carefully that things are definitely better for you, the students.

Once again, it was very good to visit your school. May I wish you all every success in the future.

Robin Hammerton HM Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills