

Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123598
Local Authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	292724
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Michelle Parker HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	766
6th form	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Anderson
Headteacher	Robert Hall
Date of previous school inspection	18 February 2002
School address	Whitchurch Road Wellington Telford TF1 3DY
Telephone number	01952 386100
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Age group	11–18
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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 Robert Johnson Catholic College is the only Catholic secondary school in Shropshire. The college is situated in Wellington in the north of the unitary authority of Telford and Wrekin but educates students from every part of the borough and beyond. A very small minority of the students are entitled to free school meals. A small proportion of students are from minority ethnic groups; of these a few have a home language other than English. A very small number of students have a statement of special educational need which is lower than average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory college providing a satisfactory standard of education, with many good and occasional outstanding features. The college exudes warmth and friendliness. Inspectors commented upon the purposeful atmosphere and the high quality of displays around the buildings.

Standards are satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress across the college. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of the high quality of care and support they receive throughout the college. Looked after students make progress in line with expectations. However, the teaching of gifted and talented students does not provide sufficient opportunities to accelerate their learning and, consequently, they make satisfactory progress.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good and occasional outstanding lessons. In the satisfactory lessons a small minority of students did not behave as they should because they were not sufficiently interested in the work. The college has been proactive in helping students improve behaviour. As a result, the vast majority of behaviour around the college and in lessons is good. Nevertheless, a small minority of parents are rightly concerned about the behaviour of a small number of students. Personal development and well-being are good. The college works effectively with a wide range of external agencies that promote students' well-being. The smart canteen and changes to menus have supported students in making healthy choices and numbers taking a college meal have risen. The college has achieved a 'Platinum' award for healthy eating. The contribution that students make to the community is outstanding. They have effectively worked with people with learning needs over the past 25 years which has enriched their lives. The development of students' work place skills is good.

The care and guidance of students are good. Students are well supported throughout their time in college. The college has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Its self-evaluation is accurate and inspection evidence supports the college's own judgements. Appropriate steps have been taken to address all the issues identified during the last inspection.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Whilst appropriate systems are in place, monitoring of the college's teaching and use of assessment is not always consistently carried out.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Standards in this inclusive sixth form are close to the national average and students make satisfactory progress overall. Early identification of underachievement and an effective tutorial system have resulted in a low drop-out rate and better progress by the end of Year 13. Teaching is satisfactory overall with much that is good. The curriculum is satisfactory. It has been appropriately broadened to offer more opportunities for vocational education. Leadership in the sixth form is satisfactory.

Attendance in the sixth form is poor, especially in Year 13. At present the college does not accurately monitor sixth form attendance. Consequently, students engaged in private study are not clearly identified.

Students are fully integrated in the life of the college. They are keen to volunteer and take on a wide range of leadership roles from being prefects to acting as 'buddies' with younger students.

This has enabled them to be good role models. Their personal development is good because the college fully involves the sixth form as part of college life.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching across the college to engage and challenge all students and thus raise attainment through better differentiation.
- Ensure that provision for gifted and talented students accelerates their learning.
- Ensure that monitoring of assessment and its use are consistent across the college.
- Improve attendance in the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards are satisfactory. In 2005, the college's GCSE results dipped and students' progress was lower than expected. However, when the 2006 GCSE results are compared with students' attainment on entry they represent satisfactory progress overall. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs has improved and is broadly similar to those gained nationally. In mathematics, students attained lower GCSE grades than expected in 2006, but standards are now rising and the present Year 11 are making satisfactory progress. Progress overall is satisfactory across the college. Students make better progress in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. Validated information for the college's 2006 Key Stage 3 tests is not yet available. However, the college's own data indicate that progress is good in English and satisfactory in science. In mathematics, there has been a drive to improve achievement and progress is now broadly satisfactory, with about one third of students in the present Year 9 making good progress. The improvements in mathematics are the result of better staffing arrangements and the impact of the new head of department. The college sets challenging targets for students, which are closely monitored. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress but the college does not sufficiently plan to challenge these students' needs in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development is good overall. Attendance is satisfactory. The college has introduced appropriate measures to reinforce the importance of good attendance and absence is not condoned without good reason. Students' attitudes to work are generally positive and behaviour during lessons is good overall. However, some students' behaviour is a distraction to other students. In a few cases the pace of lessons suffers because students do not listen to instructions. Students enjoy college. They feel strongly that they are listened to and that their suggestions are implemented where possible. For example, the decision to adopt a college blazer in black instead of brown was the result of the students' choice.

The atmosphere in the college is friendly. Relationships overall are very positive and students socialise well with each other and with staff. Bullying is not evident in the college. Students state that they are safe and well cared for. Students said there were no instances of racist behavior. Students' spiritual and moral education is good. The citizenship and religious instruction courses promote students' moral and social responsibility, and effectively develop

students' ability to discern through healthy debate. This has encouraged their active involvement in working with others both in college and its wider community. Good health is a feature of the college and students have a good awareness of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. Healthy eating is appropriately encouraged through the provision of good and well balanced college meals. A good range of opportunities for regular exercise is provided through many extra-curricular sporting activities and the well equipped training and fitness facilities. The college council feels that it has a voice and is listened to.

A particular strength of the college is the way students take responsibility, work in the community and support a range of charities. The college is in receipt of a number of awards for its charitable work in the community, a notable feature being the Monday Night Club which has recently celebrated its 25th anniversary.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The inspection evidence supports the college's own evaluation of the teaching. In the majority of lessons, teaching ensures that students make at least satisfactory progress. In a few lessons, there is good and occasionally outstanding teaching. In satisfactory lessons, students work steadily and are clear what the expected outcomes are for the lesson. However, at times, not all students are sufficiently engaged in the tasks in hand. This lack of challenge slows the pace of learning. In the best lessons, the pace of learning is good and the varied content both enthuses and challenges the students. Teaching in these lessons develops students' independent learning skills, their ability to work in a group and as a team, and their ability to discuss and analyse.

There is a clear policy for assessment which involves the regular collection and publication of students' progress towards expected academic targets. The manner in which subject areas and teachers use this data to inform planning varies widely. Thus teachers do not always ensure that gifted and talented students are sufficiently challenged. The quality of marking also varies too much. The best provides detailed feedback which gives an accurate level or grade and clear guidance on what students need to do to improve. However, some marking is too infrequent and insufficient comment is made to aid improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and contributes positively to students' progress. This concurred with the college's view. Improvements have led to a broad range of options in Years 10 and 11 with vocational courses being largely taught in partnership with other local providers. However, these opportunities are restricted to a small number of students.

The curriculum provides well for the needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities but less so for the more able. The college has a policy for the gifted and talented and a range of teaching strategies is employed in the classroom to support these students. The curriculum is enriched by many opportunities such as trips and extra-curricular activities in the performing arts and sport.

The college provides a clear academic pathway into the sixth form curriculum, which is satisfactory. Students have access to a broad range of advanced level courses.

The curriculum promotes safe and healthy lifestyles through an improving careers, health and enterprise programme and two hours per week of physical education for all students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Strong pastoral support, which results in students feeling safe, provides a caring environment in which students of all ages can flourish. The college discharges its responsibilities for safeguarding students appropriately. The celebration of students' achievement around the college is very prominent.

The Emmaus Centre provides appropriate additional support for students who are vulnerable learners. The overwhelming majority of parents think highly of the college. Transition arrangements into Year 7 are good. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are identified early and are well catered for. Those students recently arrived from Eastern Europe who are learning English as a second language are effectively supported.

Careers education is provided within a citizenship, health and enterprise programme and is now satisfactory following the recent appointment of a new coordinator. The college has forged effective links with the Connexions service which ensure the smooth transition for students to post-16 education or training. As yet, the careers and pastoral support for the options process in Year 9 is less well developed as are students' opportunities for work-related learning beyond their two weeks work experience in Year 10.

Students' academic progress is assessed accurately and tracked well. However, feedback to students is variable in quality and some comments do not effectively guide students to make effective improvements in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has a clear vision for the college which has been effectively shared with all staff. The recently remodelled senior management team has clear lines of responsibility. However, monitoring of teaching and information gained from this are not always consistent across the college.

Subject leaders discharge their management responsibilities satisfactorily overall. Where practice is good, staff have individual action plans which link to department and college development priorities, heads of department coach and model good teaching, and data analysis appropriately informs planning. Recent subject leadership appointments have strengthened leadership and management. Further improvements in leadership have been developed through appropriate training.

Equality of opportunity is actively promoted by the college. A regular review cycle ensures that all policies are regularly updated and are appropriately informed by students' views.

The use of resources and staff is satisfactory. Imaginative use has been made to improve teaching spaces. The new sports facilities have significantly improved students' attitudes to keeping healthy.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors have ensured that appropriate systems are in place to monitor and challenge the college.

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.

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	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?	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	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ 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

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	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	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to us. You impressed us with the courtesy and respect you showed to everyone. We were very interested in your views and pleased to hear that you enjoyed coming to college and were justly proud of it and your achievements. You have helped us to get a clear picture of life here. You go to a satisfactory college with many good and occasional outstanding features.

You take an active role both in college and in your local community. Your commitment to supporting a wide range of charities and work such as helping at the Monday Night Club is outstanding as is your support and work with younger students. The pastoral care and support you receive from college are also good. This has ensured that the number of you going into further education and work when you leave college is high.

The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs has improved and is broadly similar to those gained nationally. Standards in the sixth form are also similar to the national average. All lessons seen were at least satisfactory, with many good and some outstanding lessons. Behaviour around the college and in lessons is good, although in a small minority of lessons a small number of students did not behave as well as they might. The college has done a great deal to help ensure behaviour has improved but occasionally some students spoil this. All staff work very hard on your behalf and care about you. However, we have asked the college to provide better opportunities for those of you who are gifted and talented to accelerate your learning through taking external examinations earlier. We have also asked for teaching to provide even more interesting activities to challenge and engage all students. Your attendance is good in the main college, but you are more casual in your attendance in the sixth form. This needs to improve.

The leadership of your headteacher has led to improvements in the college and we have asked that the college monitors all of its work more consistently.

To improve further we have asked the college to:

- improve attendance in the sixth form
- provide opportunities to study for external examinations earlier
- improve teaching further so that work is more interesting and raises attainment
- monitor the college's work more consistently.

We wish you every success in the future.