

Blessed Robert Sutton Catholic Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124459
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	293005
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	John Evans 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	705
6th form	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Ward
Headteacher	Tony Downey
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2002
School address	Bluestone Lane Stanton Road Stapenhill Burton-on-Trent DE15 9SD
Telephone number	01283 749458
Fax number	01283 239196

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Inspection number	293005

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Robert Sutton is a small Catholic comprehensive school on the southern edge of Burton-on-Trent. It attracts students from towns and villages around the border of Derbyshire and Leicestershire as well as the immediate area. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is half the national average. One in ten students comes from minority ethnic backgrounds, although English is the first language for most of them. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is slightly below the national average, although an above average number of students has statements of special educational need. The school became a specialist sports college in 2005.

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 an improving school and its overall effectiveness is good. Successful action has been taken to improve the progress made by students and to raise standards. Students now make good progress overall and particularly during Key Stage 3. In 2006, the standards reached by students aged 14 and 16 were above national averages and in the sixth form they were around the national average. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve as well as other students. Standards are particularly good in mathematics, religious education and physical education (PE). Students' personal development is good. Most students enjoy going to school, feel safe there and are involved in experiences which promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Students participate well in PE and sport and make healthy eating choices. They contribute well to the school community and to charitable causes. Good attention to the development of their literacy and numeracy skills helps prepare them well for future life. Teaching and learning are mostly good. Most teachers provide well managed and purposeful lessons which keep students motivated and engaged. The needs of students with learning difficulties and those whose first language is not English are well met. Almost all students learn well most of the time. However, teachers do not always plan their lessons sufficiently to meet the range of abilities in each class. A few teachers do not manage behaviour well, and learning in these lessons is disrupted by the inappropriate behaviour of a small minority of students. Assessment is often good. Students generally understand how well they are doing, but in some subjects work is not set or marked frequently enough. The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets the needs and interests of the majority of students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The development of literacy and numeracy skills is effective. However, the school recognises the need to improve its provision for citizenship, careers guidance, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and, particularly, the range of vocational courses available to students in Key Stage 4. Students participate well in a good enrichment programme, which is particularly strong in music and sports. Care, guidance and support are good. The school demonstrates an outstanding commitment to inclusion and to the interests of vulnerable children. Effective intervention is well targeted on students at risk of underachieving. Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress and the life of the school. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher leads the school well and ensures a supportive environment in which staff can pursue the school's joint ambitions of becoming as inclusive and highly achieving as possible. A strong senior leadership team has developed and subject leadership has been strengthened. The school's self-evaluation demonstrates a very accurate appreciation of most of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, although much checking of provision is very effective, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives to develop teaching, learning and assessment are not always strong or comprehensive enough.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school correctly judges the sixth form, run jointly with the neighbouring high school, to be satisfactory and improving. Standards attained by students are mostly in line with national averages. Recent results show year-on-year improvement in the progress students make, which has previously been below expectation. The quality of teaching and learning, students' personal development and the care, guidance and support they receive are comparable with the main school. Collaboration with other post-16 providers enables a broad enough curriculum to be offered to meet the needs and interests of those students wishing to stay on in the school,

including vocational courses at levels 2 and 3. Leadership and management are securing clear improvements, but procedures for monitoring and evaluating sixth form provision are not yet applied robustly and systematically.

What the school should do to improve further

- Promote and monitor more strongly how well initiatives to improve the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment are being implemented to ensure that teaching meets the needs of all pupils well and that work is set and marked frequently in all subjects.
- Take effective action to eradicate the disruption to lessons caused by instances of inappropriate behaviour.
- Extend students' access to vocational options in Key Stage 4, and develop the provision for citizenship, personal and social education and careers guidance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Attainment on entry is very slightly above average and the school has made a determined effort to drive up standards since the previous inspection so that the standards students attain at the school are securely above average. As a result, students' attainment in their Key Stage 3 national tests and in their GCSEs has risen to above national averages and is now good in relation to their starting points. The school has succeeded in improving the amount of progress students make during Key Stage 3 and, more recently, during Key Stage 4. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and also make good progress in their learning. Students are helped to achieve well through effective teaching and purposeful academic support and guidance. They are set appropriately challenging targets which they meet with increasing frequency. The school's tracking data and students' work in lessons also show that students are making good progress. The school has identified, through its own monitoring, that students' make most progress in Key Stage 3 and has made efforts to make learning more interesting and stimulating in subjects in Key Stage 4 in order to raise achievement further. In 2006, the proportion of students who attained five or more higher grades at GCSEs at grades A* to C surpassed the school's best ever performance and all students achieved at least one GCSE pass. However, the school is far from complacent about the standards attained and every effort is being made to ensure that this good progress is maintained and any underachievement addressed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral social and cultural development, are good. The Catholic Christian ethos of the school has a positive influence on students' spiritual, moral and social development. Charitable giving is established well and students are proud of what they can contribute to others. Most students say that they enjoy coming to the school, and their parents agree. This is reflected in low unauthorised absence. Permanent exclusions are very low because vulnerable students are supported effectively both socially and academically. The behaviour of the majority of students in lessons is good and relationships are constructive. Some students and their parents express concerns

about a few disaffected students who can disrupt the learning of others if their behaviour is not well managed or if teaching is not stimulating. The school has responded positively to students' perceptions that there is some bullying. Incidents are dealt with effectively, trained student mentors are involved and there is sufficient, good, caring adult support. Students are starting to make well informed, healthy choices at lunchtimes and follow safe practices. Participation in physical activity is high and sport is popular because specialist sports college status has increased the range of provision available. Students value this and also appreciate other enrichment opportunities, including visits to theatres and art galleries and the opportunity to join in musical activities. Students generally respond well to opportunities to participate in group work and encouragement to be independent learners. Students' basic skills are well developed, which will enable them to enter working life with confidence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Typically, lessons have good pace and provide students with appropriate challenge and frequent opportunities to contribute. This ensures they are constantly involved in active learning and helps them to develop their insight and understanding. In most cases, teachers' subject expertise and enthusiasm, and their understanding of how to manage the behaviour of classes and individuals, encourage students to be excited by new knowledge and skills. As a result, students develop a strong sense of purpose and concentrate and cooperate well. Effective lessons are underpinned by good planning, clear learning objectives and the efficient use of time. Students are encouraged to think for themselves and to express ideas and opinions. The needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language are identified early and their needs are specifically targeted. As a result, all students learn well. Staff training has improved teaching and learning, but there is still variation in their quality across the school. In a small number of lessons, there is a lack of stimulation, challenge and pace and this restricts students' progress. In these lessons, planning does not take enough account of students' different needs and abilities and behaviour is not managed well. Parents and carers are well informed about the standards students reach through regular progress reports. However, although students say that they understand teachers' assessment of them, in some subjects routine homework and class work are not marked often enough and feedback provided does not always give clear guidance on what students should do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is satisfactory. In Key Stages 3 and 4, provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) have improved since the last inspection. The range of subjects matches most students' needs and enables them to make good progress. However, the school recognises the need to improve the range of vocational courses and provision for careers guidance, citizenship and PSHE. Within the school, vocational learning opportunities in Key Stage 4 are very limited and only a small number of students takes up vocational courses at the local college. Development of this aspect of the curriculum is one of

the school's key priorities. Courses are appropriately tailored to the needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities and enable these students to achieve well. Specialist sports college status is beginning to have a positive impact across the whole school and on the school's wider community, especially through the development of students' leadership skills and promoting good practice in teaching and learning. The curriculum makes a significant contribution to students' personal development and healthy lifestyles. Most subjects are enhanced by good extracurricular activities. The programme of school-wide enrichment opportunities is responsive to students' interests. The range of activities is particularly strong in sports and music and most students take advantage of the opportunities available enthusiastically.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The care, guidance and support provided for students are good and the school is rightly proud of its outstanding commitment to including all students. The many commendations made by external agencies demonstrate how well the school safeguards the welfare and well-being of vulnerable students and responds to their individual needs. Good provision, which includes effective teaching assistants, is made for students with learning difficulties and also those with disabilities. The school has secure and very thorough arrangements for child protection which comply with government requirements. Students are safe in the school. The school's tracking of students' progress is effective. Teachers have a clear view of which students are underachieving and need help to catch up. Intervention to support underachieving students is timely and well planned. Students are aware of their targets and the levels they are attaining, which are reported regularly to parents. Parents are well informed about the school through newsletters and an informative website, and their views are systematically canvassed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are good. The school is strongly focused on being highly inclusive at the same time as raising standards of achievement for all its students. The headteacher is steering the school with intelligence and determination and has cultivated a highly supportive environment in which staff can develop themselves and their contribution. Members of the strong senior leadership team bring distinct and complementary qualities that contribute well to the school's improvement. Curriculum management is mostly good. Data are well used to set targets for improvement and this is helping to raise achievement. The best subject leaders set and demonstrate high standards of teaching and monitor performance across their subject well. The school is endeavouring to develop all subject leaders to this level. Governors strongly support the strategic direction and ethos of the school and closely monitor key aspects of its performance. Development planning is good. Objectives and priorities are clear and the methods by which they will be achieved are coherent. However, not all desired outcomes are sufficiently quantified or monitored. For example, managers have an exaggerated sense of the extent to which teachers use assessment to support learning and plan their lessons to provide sufficient challenge across the ability range. Accommodation in the main school is outdated, shabby and

provides insufficient space, particularly social and recreational space for students. In contrast, the sixth form centre provides very good accommodation and resources. The quality of provision the school makes in these difficult circumstances represents good value for money. The school has improved considerably since its last inspection, trends in standards and achievements are positive and it has some very capable managers and teachers. Its capacity to continue to improve is good.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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	2
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	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

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	3	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
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?	2	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	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	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we came to carry out the inspection of your school. We enjoyed meeting many of you and the team's special thanks go to those of you we interviewed and spoke with about your work and aspects of school life. We reached the judgement that Robert Sutton is an improving school which is now good. This is so for a number of reasons: the standards you reach at 14 and 16 are now higher than they are nationally; you all now make more progress during your time at the school than was the case a few years ago; most of the time you learn well because so many of your lessons are taught by very capable and enthusiastic teachers who keep you motivated and involved; your experiences at school contribute to your own good personal development, specialist sports college status is making a real difference and you feel safe there; the school provides good care, guidance and support, and the interests of more vulnerable students are particularly well looked after; the sixth form offers a good range of subjects and its results are improving; and, finally, these attributes all come down to the fact that the school is well led and managed by a headteacher, his senior colleagues and many of the heads of department, who really know how to make the school even better. Sometimes, lessons are disrupted by a few students who misbehave and we have asked the school to take steps to prevent this from happening. We have also asked the school to increase the range of vocational courses available in Key Stage 4, so that those of you not entirely suited to GCSEs have some more relevant options, and improve the provision of citizenship, personal and social education and careers guidance. Finally, we have asked the school to monitor more thoroughly how well all your lessons meet the needs of all abilities in each class and how well assessment is being used to help you to learn better.