



St Bede's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125278
Local Authority Surrey
Inspection number 293247
Inspection date 12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Jennifer Smith HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Carlton Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Redhill
Age range of pupils	11–18		RH1 2LQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01737 212108
Number on roll (school)	1714	Fax number	01737 212118
Number on roll (6th form)	366		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Peter Townsend
		Headteacher	Mr Chris Curtis
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–18	12 October 2006	293247

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Bede's School is a larger than average ecumenical state maintained church school, with a larger than average sixth form, located on the edge of Redhill. The school serves a very wide catchment area stretching to the outer London Boroughs, Surrey and the Crawley area. Its foundation is a partnership of all denominations, including the Free Churches. The majority of students are White British, and the proportion of students entitled to free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is below that found nationally. A little under 1% of students have a statement of special educational need, which is slightly lower than the national average. Over the last eight years the school has undergone considerable new building work, adding a performing arts centre, a science block and a recently opened sports hall.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'We are sure that the Christian ethos is at the forefront of the school's success and this is very important to us.' This comment, from a parent, very much sums up the view that inspectors have of this very well led and successful school.

The overall effectiveness of the school is outstanding, including the excellent care and guidance offered to its students and, a commitment to ensuring that all students no matter what their ability are offered a first-rate education, creating a very inclusive school. Students enjoy coming to St Bede's School, they invariably behave well and make a very positive contribution to the school and the wider community.

The school has progressed well since its last inspection because of outstanding leadership and management. Due to the tireless efforts of the Headteacher and the school community, over the last seven years St Bede's has benefited from significantly improved buildings and new facilities, including a performing arts centre, a new science area and much needed new sports hall. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been appropriately improved by providing a greater range of courses, including vocational choices.

St Bede's has good leadership at all levels. The senior staff understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well and know where to focus attention for future development. The school has a strongly emerging culture of self-evaluation. Strategic action plans have been developed to address areas needing attention. A recent whole school focus of enhancing effective team leadership within departments is at present at an early stage but has potential to contribute well to teachers' professional development.

Students make excellent progress in their time at school and standards reached at the end of Year 11 in GCSE examinations are well above the national average. Students reach similarly high standards in the sixth form. A high percentage of students leave the sixth form to study in further and higher education, including Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

The quality of teaching is good overall and the focus on assessment strategies (called 'assessment for learning') is beginning to create some outstanding lessons and to further improve the quality of learning. A minority of lessons remain satisfactory. The good teaching combines with students' outstanding attitudes to work, the excellent procedures to support and guide them, and the exceptional support they receive from parents to ensure that achievement is outstanding.

The school provides very good value for money and has shown good capacity for further development.

A further comment from a parent encapsulates the work of the school, 'St Bede's is well led and has a strong ethos which comes across in the way the children mature and develop into well rounded individuals'.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are outstanding. Students report positively on their experiences in the school and act as mentors and role models for the rest of the school. They achieve results that are well above the national average and their progress is outstanding. They are very well taught and as one sixth former said, 'It's a fantastic place to be; we feel comfortable here; we are pushed and there is a good social life'. The care and guidance offered to the sixth form is excellent. The sixth form provides excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Create consistency of approach to team leadership across middle managers.
- Ensure that the recent development of 'assessment for learning' is part of the practice in all departments in order to raise the overall standard of teaching and the quality of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students enter the school with standards that are generally above the national average. In the first three years in the school (Years 7, 8 and 9) they make good progress and results achieved in tests at the end of Year 9 are higher than the national average in English, mathematics and science. Overall, standards are exceptionally high and achievement is outstanding.

At the end of Year 11, standards reached at GCSE are consistently high in nearly all subjects, with 74% of students achieving 5 or more A* - C grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics. These results are well above the national average. Several students over the years have been commended by examination boards for achievement in GCSE examinations at the very highest level. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also make very good progress because of the careful support that they are given.

Students make very good progress in the sixth form and standards reached in both GCE Advanced Supplementary and GCE A2 Level (full GCE Advanced Level) are similarly high. Almost all students gained a grade A-E pass at A2 Level in 2006, with 49% of these being achieved at the highest grades of A and B; a higher proportion than that found nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of students is an outstanding feature of St Bede's School. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Students are happy at this school; they get on exceptionally well with their teachers and with each other. Behaviour in the school is invariably very good in the majority of lessons. Relationships between teachers and students and between students themselves are exemplary. A student reported that in the school, 'there is a good feel, it's a fantastic place'. Students are very well prepared for life outside school particularly through their citizenship lessons. Students considered citizenship lessons good because 'we talk about the world about us and discuss issues related to personal finance'.

Students are very aware of safe, healthy lifestyles; they take advantage of numerous clubs and physical activities and are rightly proud of the girls' rugby team. Charity work is strong, supporting activities both in this country and abroad. Notable funds are raised during sixth form Rag Week, through business enterprises and competitions like 'Strictly Come Dancing'. Students' views are respected and considered in making changes to school routines and facilities. Through the Senior Students' Team and School Council, students hone team and leadership skills and learn crucial decision-making techniques, in gathering useful experiences for the workplace. Students leave the school as well rounded, confident individuals, well equipped for the next steps in their lives and they often continue to support the school once they have left.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. However, not all lessons are consistently of a good or outstanding quality; some are only satisfactory. A number of lessons observed were lively and very purposeful. In these lessons, students are actively involved, often working in pairs and small groups engaging in lively debate. The purpose of the learning is understood well by students. Opportunities for pupils to assess their own and other pupils' work, effectively help them understand how to improve their own work. This has been a major initiative in the school in recent years and is gradually being adopted in more subject areas. Teaching is often well paced and pupils are eager to participate. They present their views with great confidence. Teachers generally structure their lessons well, so as to ensure very effective learning. This helps students of all abilities to participate and their attitudes to learning are very good as a result. In a music lesson, for example, students were all able to make excellent progress by playing the primary

chords of a song because of the interesting and adventurous teaching style that enthused them.

The quality and consistency in marking and the use of target setting are not yet sufficiently developed across all departments. Where this is good, pupils are clear about how to improve their work. Excellent examples of marking were seen in an English lesson where students were given very helpful and detailed comments about how to improve their writing. However, this was not a uniform practice in all lessons seen. In some less effective lessons teaching was less exciting and occasionally dull, which led to some low level off-task behaviour.

The school has rightly identified new assessment strategies as a means to improve further students' learning; this is a whole school teaching focus. Teachers, using this approach, ('assessment for learning') commented on the very positive impact it was creating for students to take responsibility for meeting their agreed targets. The school is aware that not all departments have yet fully developed this way of working.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good throughout the school. A recent curriculum review for Years 10 and 11 has led to much greater flexibility in curriculum choice for students, providing a greater range of subjects to choose from and a reduction in compulsory subjects. Despite modern foreign languages no longer being compulsory a very high percentage of students continue to study at least one language in Key Stage 4. Students in Years 10 and 11 behave better as a result of the more flexible, broader curriculum that has been developed at their request. Vocational courses in school are still limited but partnership with a local college, which is popular, is available for students of all abilities. A visiting bus provides a construction course and this has led to several students choosing to begin apprenticeship at the end of Year 11. Able mathematicians in Year 10 are entered for GCSE a year early, and begin advanced studies in Year 11.

Students who have literacy and numeracy difficulties in Years 7 to 9 appreciate the extra individual help from sixth form students known as 'helpliners'. Students reported that, 'they (sixth formers) are always there to help you.' Talented students are well provided for in music, but specific provision for the gifted and talented is more limited. Many students choose to enter the thriving sixth form where they can choose from a wide range of subjects. However, there is a limited range of vocational courses in the sixth form.

An extensive range of extra-curricular activities exists, including cross-curricular and enterprise days and residential trips. Students enjoy dance sessions, develop confidence through debating competitions and do well in team and individual sporting activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students receive outstanding care, guidance and support. A Year 9 student commented that, 'teachers always help us and the people are always friendly'. Staff give freely of their time guiding students well in choosing subjects and courses. Most students reported that they know what their targets mean and what they need to do to reach them; they are becoming more involved in keeping track of their own progress.

Considerable thought is given to supporting students to settle easily into new routines, especially when they start school. Parents of Year 7 students who started school this September were particularly appreciative of the way their children had been helped to settle into this large school. The support of vulnerable students is strong, through experienced liaison with specialists and work-related learning initiatives. Students in local authority care (Looked After students) have personal education plans and those with emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties are well cared for by skilled staff. Students that have been permanently excluded from other schools, who find it difficult settling back in school, are treated sensitively and fully included; they have a tailor made curriculum. Sixth form students play an impressive part in the school community through supporting younger students, counselling and organising events. The school's Chaplains, nurse and counsellor effectively support others who need help.

A parent commented that 'the school has a caring culture that seeks to achieve pastoral care as well as educational needs'. Many parents have commented on the high quality of support for students with learning difficulties, coupled with the degree of understanding needed for their care which has enabled their children to attain well.

Proper attention is given to child protection, risk assessments and safety. Healthy lifestyles are well cultivated through the citizenship programme.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The leadership of the headteacher and his senior team are excellent, and leadership and management across the rest of the school are good. The headteacher's clear vision and highly successful leadership of the school have ensured that the caring and inclusive nature of the school is at the heart of its community, enabling all students to have the opportunity to achieve their best. The high calibre of the leadership, curriculum and pastoral teams are well respected by parents and pupils alike. The senior leadership team has had a number of changes both in its structure and personnel recently, creating excellent impetus to a range of initiatives to improve further the teaching and learning; such as 'assessment for learning' and in developing middle managers as team leaders.

The Headteacher was closely involved in setting in place the local authority's scheme for ensuring that students, who have been permanently excluded from schools, have

a new school place. St Bede's takes a number of these students and works tirelessly to ensure that they are given the best possible opportunity to re-engage in schooling; helping to ensure that this is a fully inclusive school.

The school has good monitoring and evaluation strategies in place. These are effectively carried out by the majority of departments and curriculum areas but it is not yet consistent in all areas. Departments undertake a thorough review annually and build appropriate action plans based on these reviews.

The governing body is very effective and governors have strong links to the school providing good challenge and support to the Headteacher. Parents show their support for the school in a number of ways, particularly reflected in their responses to questionnaires and surveys conducted by the school and through their excellent attendance at meetings arranged for them.

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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>	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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
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	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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	1	

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?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
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	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently I should like to thank you for the polite and helpful way you welcomed us. We very much enjoyed discussing with you the work that you were doing and looking at the progress that you were making. You talked enthusiastically about how much you gained from being a student at St Bede's. We thought you would like a summary of the inspection findings but we hope that you and your parents will take the opportunity to read the whole report.

Your school is outstanding and has many strengths, the main qualities are:

- * St Bede's School provides you with a very good quality education, enabling you to progress well through your schooling and achieve outstanding examination results in Year 11 and in the sixth form
- * the strong Christian and inclusive ethos is at the heart of your school and both students and teachers contribute well to these values, which are an essential part of life at St Bede's
- * you take pride in your work, are developing good skills in assessing your own work in many subjects and take responsibility for reaching the targets set
- * teachers support and guide you very well and relationships between teachers and students are exemplary and, in the main, behaviour is excellent.

We have asked the school, with your help, to improve the following areas:

- * to extend further the self-assessment strategies in all subjects, so that you can be more involved in your own assessment, which is helping you learn so effectively in many lessons
- * to continue to create consistency of approach to team leadership in all subject areas.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools