

# St Bede's Catholic Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116998
<b>Local Authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	302302
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ceri Morgan 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>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	627
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger Thatcher
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Larkin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 July 2003
<b>School address</b>	Holloway Lane Redditch B98 7HA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01527 525916
<b>Fax number</b>	01527 525916

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<b>Age group</b>	9–13
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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

St Bede's is a larger than average middle school serving the Catholic community of Redditch and Bromsgrove. It is a voluntary aided school for pupils aged from nine to 13. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. There is a higher than national proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and this proportion has risen in recent years. The majority of pupils are of White British background.

At the time of the inspection the normal timetable had been partially suspended to allow for pupils to sit national and other tests.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Bede's is a good school where the personal development of the pupils is outstanding. The school's positive and thoughtful atmosphere, the mutual respect between staff and pupils, and the superb pastoral care nurture the self-confidence of all pupils exceptionally well.

Teachers are hard-working and conscientious and ably supported by a strong team of support staff. Together they ensure that pupils thrive during their time at St Bede's. Indeed, the pupils say that they greatly enjoy their time in school, know that they are very safe and well cared for and appreciate the help they receive from adults. They behave well. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of this quality of care and education. However a significant minority, despite appreciative comments, also expressed some justified concerns about the level of communication they receive.

The standards reached by pupils by the end of Year 8 are above average. After a period of lower standards in Key Stage 2, there has been an improvement in standards in English and mathematics over the last two years as a result of changes to the way the subjects are taught. Standards in the 2006 tests were broadly average but improvement has continued and current pupils are reaching above average levels. The progress made by pupils has varied in recent years but is now good overall. It is satisfactory for the first two years at the school but improves as the pupils move into Years 7 and 8. With above average standards and the outstanding growth in their personal qualities, pupils leave St Bede's exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and their later lives.

The quality of teaching is good overall with some examples of outstanding teaching. At its best, high levels of challenge and expectation combined with genuine enthusiasm and a cracking pace keep pupils fully engaged. Pupils respond well to this but are capable of even greater responsibility and achievement. Although many pupils could accurately say how well they are doing, not as many could explain in detail what they need to do to improve. This contrasts with the best classes in which pupils are involved in assessing their own work regularly which, coupled with high quality marking, ensures good progress. In one outstanding lesson a pupil, discussing apartheid, was asked to phrase a complex question. She asked a fellow pupil who was acting the role of an apartheid victim, 'how does it feel not to have the privilege of a true education?' This exemplified the quality of relationships in school, the thoughtfulness of many pupils and their responsiveness to greater challenge. This high level expectation is not the case in all classes. The school recognises the need to improve teaching in some subjects and classes.

The school has been successful in achieving several national awards including Investors In People and Sportsmark Gold. The school has worked particularly successfully to ensure pupils are aware of how to eat and live more healthily and this has resulted in a healthy schools award.

School managers all have the welfare of the pupils at heart and manage change with sensitivity. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection and the contribution of subject leaders in English and mathematics, for example, is good. The headteacher leads thoughtfully and manages resources efficiently. The school improvement plan outlines a clear set of well judged priorities. Although helpful, it does not set challenging enough targets or have enough detail. Given the good teaching and the responsiveness of the pupils the school does not yet show high enough levels of aspiration academically.

The school has a pastoral support system that helps new pupils settle well and all pupils feel part of a strong community. This is an inclusive school. All pupils, whatever their needs, take

part in the full range of activity. Indeed one pupil with very particular needs is a member of the successful school football team and has benefited hugely from this experience.

The school is well poised to continue improving.

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

- Increase the level of challenge in all targets, both at the level of the individual pupil and the whole school.
- Improve the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by making sharper judgements and using this information more effectively to improve teaching and whole-school planning.
- Improve the quality of communication with parents regarding curriculum content and pupils' progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average and improving, and achievement is good. The attainment of pupils when they start at St Bede's is average overall but with some variation from year to year. The progress then made by pupils up to age 11 has also been variable and has dipped in some subjects in recent years. However, the school has made a significant recovery and progress is now satisfactory overall by age 11 and good in English. Standards attained at the end of Key Stage 2 by current pupils are above average and are generally stronger in English than mathematics. A significant recent improvement is in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels at age 11 and this is now above the national average. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress due to the carefully tailored support they receive.

Progress accelerates in Years 7 and 8 and is good. The school uses a nationally recognised method of tracking pupils' progress and this is showing that the majority are expected to reach their targets in 2007. However, some of these targets are too low and the school acknowledges that the performance of boys in writing could be improved. Standards in other subjects are variable but there are significant strengths here too, particularly in technology based subjects.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils greatly enjoy their education and talk enthusiastically about belonging to the school. The school is 'really friendly' where 'you feel that you belong' are typical responses. Pupils feel exceptionally safe and secure in their learning environment, and as a result develop a striking degree of self-confidence. They have a well developed sense of what is right and wrong, and of how their actions affect others. Consequently, relationships are excellent, and behaviour is often exemplary despite some dips when pupils are bored. These factors, combined with their practice of healthy and safe living, result in pupils' outstanding sense of well-being. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils take on responsibility willingly, for example when Year 8 pupils mentor younger pupils. The members of the school council carry out their work in a businesslike way, and enable all pupils to have their say in improving the school community. Recent suggestions from pupils, for example for improvements to toilet provision, have been acted upon. Initiatives to improve attendance have resulted in this now being good. The school

is working hard to encourage all pupils to benefit from the education offered, and not to miss opportunities by taking holidays during term-time.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall. During the inspection some lessons were outstanding and the majority were good. In the best lessons pupils work with real enjoyment because they are given opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, participating with enthusiasm in well judged activities with clear objectives and assessment. The way most teachers use technology to add sparkle and imagination to lessons is impressive and helps maintain pupils' interest. One particular success seen was during a lesson where pupils used spreadsheets to calculate financial risk using a wide range of computer and mathematical skills. This lesson also contributed well to their understanding of economic issues and was a good example of how teachers are increasingly making good links between subjects.

In English, pupils' work is marked in detail, with explanations of the level reached and what to do to improve. In one good science lesson pupils were given very clear objectives so that they each knew what they should be able to do by the end of the lesson. This, together with well judged lesson timings, contributes to good progress being made by pupils.

In some less successful lessons teachers talk for too long and do not give pupils the chance to learn in different styles through the use of visual materials or practical activities. Sometimes the timing of plenary sessions is inappropriate, either being too rushed or too long. Teachers do not always provide suitable challenges for pupils at different levels. In these lessons pupils still try hard but their progress is not as fast as it could be. The school's evaluation of its teaching and learning is accurate but not enough is being done to improve it further by making the most of sharing good practice.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. In order to raise standards the school teaches pupils in groups of similar abilities in mathematics and English as well as creating a 'fast' group for the higher achieving pupils in Years 7 and 8. This has successfully improved both standards and progress although there is some scope for improving the opportunities for high achieving pupils outside of the 'fast' groups. There are some good additional improvements to the curriculum that help ensure pupils have a rich and wide range of studies.

The school meets well the needs of the pupils and a Catholic ethos through both religious education lessons and opportunities for prayer and reflection during the day. Provision for sport encourages pupils to keep fit. Within the physical education provision, which is very successful in promoting pupils' achievement, pupils have outstanding opportunities for team activities but the younger ones feel there are fewer 'fun' activities than they would like.

The personal, social and health education course provides excellent encouragement to pupils to live healthily. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities as well as by a good range of clubs and social activities. Pupils benefit from a range of visits including residential trips to France and to activity centres.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Care, support and guidance are good. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for by staff who know them well and relationships between adults and pupils are good. Pupils are also well prepared for moving to their next school and good extra support is provided at this stage for those pupils with additional needs. Secure arrangements for child protection and health and safety are in place. The school works very well with a wide range of outside agencies to support all its pupils but has especially strong links for those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. There are some especially good links with other schools nearby, for example a special school, which help broaden the experience of pupils. Pupils know who they can turn to if they have any problems. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour, bullying and racism are dealt with promptly, although some pupils express some concerns about boisterous behaviour at break times.

The quality of guidance for academic success is improving but with some variation between classes. Occasionally the targets set for pupils are not sufficiently sharp or challenging. Some teachers make very good use of assessment to ensure that pupils know the level at which they are working and what they need to do to improve but the use of this information is not yet consistent across the school. In particular, not all teachers use the substantial assessment data to improve their lesson planning. Communication with parents does not give them enough information about their children's progress or the about the content of the curriculum.

Pupils with additional needs are identified quickly and supported well through the good contribution of teaching assistants. This team is very well led and managed and the individual support available is one reason why pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties make good progress.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. Changes required from the last inspection have all been made but mathematics, although improved, still performs less well than English and the way teachers track progress is not consistent across all classes. Staff work as a very effective team with a shared vision that centres on the belief that every child matters. This vision and teamwork are due in no small part to the senior leadership in school. The school's accurate self-evaluation is based on a comprehensive analysis and paints a picture of a school that now provides a good education and is well placed to make further improvement, although it is not always used to set more challenging targets. The leadership team and the governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This accurate analysis and a record of successful change show a good capacity to continue improving.

The headteacher and senior managers lead the school thoughtfully and ensure that the welfare of the pupils is at the heart of all that they do. They have made some significant changes to the way the school operates in the last two years, particularly the introduction of ability banding at Key Stage 2 which is helping to drive up standards. There is an open and collaborative style of leadership which is helping to develop strengths in middle management as well, although reporting back to governors is not sharp enough to allow them sufficient scope for precise challenge.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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>	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

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

<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
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	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	2
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

18 May 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Bede's Middle School, Redditch, B98 7HA

You are aware that we recently inspected your school. We would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for the time taken to talk to us, especially during a week of tests.

We really enjoyed talking to you and your teachers, coming to assemblies and visiting your lessons. You told us that you think St Bede's Middle School is a good school and we agree. Indeed we think it is especially strong in helping all of you to develop well as people as well as in your studies.

There are many strengths but some of the things that we liked most about the school include:

- good standards in many subjects
- good behaviour and the respect you show each other
- the way staff genuinely care about your welfare and work hard to look after you all and teach you well
- how well pupils who have extra needs are included and looked after.

Like any good school St Bede's is ambitious to be even better and there are some suggestions we have made to help. We have asked the school to consider doing the following things:

- Set more challenging targets so that you can improve your work even more by knowing exactly what you need to learn next.
- Monitor what works well more closely and make changes more quickly where needed to help you learn more.
- Give your parents more opportunities to find out more about what you do in lessons.

Finally, thank you once again for your help. On behalf of the team I wish you all the best for the future.

Kind regards,

Ceri Morgan Her Majesty's Inspector