

Bishop Challoner Catholic Collegiate Girls' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100978
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	307550
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Asyia Kazmi HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	1019
6th form	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Dan Regan
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Myers
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Hardinge Street Stepney London E1 0AB
Telephone number	020 7790 3634
Fax number	020 7702 7398

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out jointly with the inspection of the partner boys' school by a team of two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bishop Challoner Catholic Collegiate Schools are a federation comprising an 11-18 girls' school with a mixed sixth form and an 11-16 boys' school. Boys and girls are taught separately. An executive headteacher oversees the leadership and management of both schools. There are common heads of faculties and teaching teams.

The school combines an average size 11-16 girls' school with a large mixed sixth form school on one site. The school has a single governing body and an executive headteacher. It is undergoing a £40 million construction programme following the creation of 'The Learning Village'. The great majority of the students are of the Christian faith, predominantly Catholic. A small proportion of students come from other world faiths. Approximately a quarter of the students are White British and nearly three quarters are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Predominant groups are of African, Caribbean and other White heritages. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average. The student body represents 73 different languages.

The proportion of girls with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion with a statement of educational need is well below average. More students leave before the end of Year 11 and join after the beginning of Year 7 than is usual in most schools.

The school has received a range of awards including Artsmark, Sportsmark and for Extended School. In addition the school has received a national award from the Lithuanian government for its work with Lithuanian students. The school gained humanities college status 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 a good and improving school. It has some outstanding features. The school excels in helping students to develop as individuals. As one parent said, 'since my daughter joined in September, Bishop Challoner has gone out of its way to make her feel settled'. The sustained and outstanding leadership of the headteacher over sixteen years has led to rising standards and has made a significant contribution to transforming the lives of learners. The organisation provides a haven where everyone is valued and different cultures are celebrated. It is very aware of its role in the local community and endeavours to be responsive to its needs.

It is highly inclusive and seeks to ensure that within its Catholic tradition all students from different faiths and ethnic backgrounds are respected and achieve well. Community cohesion has been nationally recognised as exemplary; it is well thought out and very strategically implemented. This has a positive impact not only on students within the school but also extends out to the local community.

Senior leaders have been very effective in ensuring outstanding care, guidance and support and a productive learning environment is created for students. Self-evaluation is generally accurate; however it sometimes lacks consistency in identifying priorities for improvement. The accommodation is undergoing a major rebuild and this has caused considerable disruption, which has been well managed.

Achievement overall is good and standards are average. For the last two years the achievement of students when compared to similar students has been amongst the highest nationally. However, students' progress has been only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and this is being addressed by senior leaders. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been used to meet the needs and interests of students to maximise their opportunities to gain qualifications. As a result the proportion of students gaining at least five GCSEs at grade C or above is high but when English and mathematics are included this proportion is below average. As a result of the development of the humanities specialism, standards are rising in religious education, history and English language.

The curriculum, enhanced by valuable support from City of London businesses, is excellent in Years 10 and 11 with a wide choice of courses on offer. In Years 7 to 9 it is being reviewed. New schemes of work are in place but in lessons the curriculum does not always build on the skills, knowledge and understanding students already have. Teaching is usually at least satisfactory and often good. However, learning is always at least good and is the result of many factors beyond just timetabled lessons. Learning takes place in a happy and well-ordered environment. Inspectors were very impressed by the maturity of the students they saw around the school.

Academic guidance is robust and rigorous, particularly in Years 10 to 13. This very effective mentoring and focused intervention has now been introduced in lower years as well. A particularly noteworthy aspect of this guidance is the support provided to parents in understanding the differences between satisfactory and excellent standards of work so they are better able to support their children. The school has worked hard to raise attendance and the results can be seen in improving attendance and punctuality. The school council is very effective in giving students a voice in the school. The number of parents who responded to the parental questionnaire was relatively low. However, those who did respond were overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Bishop Challoner does well by its sixth form students, providing good opportunities to encourage young people of all levels of attainment to aspire to further education and training. Under very effective and exceptionally caring leadership, this culturally and socially diverse growing sixth form demonstrates an overall trend of improvement in the outcomes for students. From often below average starting points many students achieve well, including those who require longer than the customary time to mature academically. Standards in Level 3 (A level equivalent) courses, however, remain below average and students' progress is variable across subject areas. Low results in information technology courses, the result of too low entry requirements, for example, unduly distort information on the overall success rate of advanced course students. Flexible and personalised pathways for students are now addressing such issues, with students regularly making good progress following a third year of post-16 studies. Checks on the current Year 12 and 13 students' progress show that the vast majority are on track to meet their challenging targets. Honest self-evaluation and a robust response to areas requiring further development demonstrate the good capacity to improve sixth form provision further.

The curriculum offers a broad range of academic and vocational opportunities, including many at Level 2 (GCSE equivalent), to meet the needs of current students well and many proceed to university and further training. Care, guidance and support of the students are outstanding. As a result students' personal development is good although attendance is sometimes lower than it should be, often because of very challenging personal circumstances. Students new to the school are well inducted and nurtured so that they quickly feel at home. Many sixth formers willingly take on a range of responsibilities within school and provide excellent support for younger students. They make their views known through the active sixth-form council and have been responsible for orchestrating the many and varied multi-cultural and British citizenship events. Students appreciate the very mature and respectful way they are treated and this fosters students' independence and initiative successfully so that many contribute generously to the wider community through the volunteer project.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lessons use teaching methods that engage students actively and challenge them fully.
- Strengthen the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 to raise standards and achievement.
- Develop the role of leaders so that evaluation is consistently as good as the best in the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Attainment on entry to the school has been improving over time, and is now average. By the end of Year 9 the students reach standards in English that are broadly average but they are below average in mathematics and science. The progress that students make in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. These year groups are a priority for improvement work in the school and senior leaders have started work on ensuring that the skills and understanding with which students join the school progress appropriately.

In Years 10 and 11 students make more rapid progress and the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes is high. However, when English and mathematics are included this falls to below average but is improving. All groups of students, including those from minority ethnic heritages and those learning English as an additional language, make at least good progress. Additional staff and particularly bilingual support staff, provide very good support, ensuring that explanations are given in home languages and English. Students with learning difficulties make outstanding progress.

In the sixth form standards in advanced level courses remain below average but given students' starting points many are achieving well. Across the full range of post 16 provision, including GCSE equivalent courses, achievement is good and standards are rising.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The personal development and well-being of the students is outstanding. The students are extremely positive and enthusiastic about their school and feel that it meets their needs very well. They are thoughtful, considerate and friendly to other students, teachers and visitors. There is a high degree of racial harmony in this 'Learning Village' community. The students say they can always turn to someone to help them if they have either personal difficulties or concerns about their school work. They enjoy their learning and behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the site. Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection because there are very strong systems and strategies in place to monitor and support students.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is excellent. There are many opportunities for them to think about ideas, actions and their consequences. For example, sixth form students led an exceptionally thought provoking assembly on their experiences of a visit to Auschwitz. There is a very strong sense of community within the school, promoted both through the Catholic ethos and through carefully structured opportunities such as the school council and restorative justice meetings.

Students have an outstanding sense of responsibility both to the community and to the environment, being mindful of the need to conserve the earth's resources. Sixth formers willingly give of their time to mentor younger students. The school's outstanding contribution to the community has been recognised by winning the local area partnership contract for youth and community work. Students gain confidence and new skills through involvement in extensive extra-curricular activities, such as Irish dancing and anger management courses. In school, the majority of students eat healthily and take sufficient exercise. The students are encouraged to adopt safe practices in lessons and around the school. Students' involvement in work-related and economic awareness programmes and the improving quality of their key skills prepare them well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Learning is greatly enhanced by the wide range of opportunities provided for students out of the classroom. Additional after school and weekend lessons, highly credible visiting speakers and the success of the school at raising the self-esteem of its students all contribute significantly to the good progress they make. Relationships in lessons are productive. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use to good effect to promote learning. Students are regularly involved in assessing their own and their peers' work and so develop effective self-critical skills. Praise is used extensively to motivate students and teaching assistants work well in partnership with teachers. In many lessons the students are fully engaged and levels of enjoyment and motivation are high. Lessons were observed where the teaching was lively, concepts were clearly explained and activities were carefully designed to challenge the students to learn at a swift pace.

In some lessons, however, teaching is mundane rather than engaging. Teachers sometimes dominate classroom talk, which limits the time students are actively learning and they become passive and disengaged learners. Consequently, there are limited opportunities for some students to develop their initiative and independence within lessons. In some lessons, planning does not fully take into account the full range of abilities in the class, with the result that a minority of students are either not challenged enough or struggle to understand. Although examples of very good marking were seen some teachers do not always mark students' books with sufficient care or regularity. This results in some students not knowing well enough what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum offered is rich, broad and balanced. The school offers an excellent curriculum in Years 10 and 11 with a broad range of traditional and vocational courses at GCSE and A level or their equivalents. This ensures that students are well prepared for the next stage of education or employment. It is further enhanced by an extensive range of trips and visits that help raise aspirations and develop students' understanding of the wider world and different cultures. Participation in sport and out of lesson activities is high. The citizenship programme offers valuable opportunities for engagement with the local and international community.

The vocational aspect of the curriculum has been planned on the basis of an analysis of local employment needs and opportunities to maximise students' economic well-being. There is a well thought out analysis of the barriers to students' achievement which the curriculum seeks to overcome, such as by mentoring by business partners and senior leaders of Year 11 students. A wide range of subjects includes examinations in 14 community languages and the school is working to develop a new qualification to address the current national gap in provision for Lithuanian students. In the sixth form students have the opportunity to progress to a good range of academic and applied courses. In the past the school has not always delivered the best

courses to build on skills developed in Year 11 but recent changes to the entrance requirements for some courses ensure a good match to students' needs and interests.

The curriculum planning in Years 7 to 9 does not ensure students are sufficiently challenged or take into account their previous learning, and this has had an impact on achievement. Senior leaders are already addressing this through reviewing schemes of work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Outstanding quality of care, guidance and support ensures students' well-being. It promotes their personal development extremely effectively and helps them achieve well. Students benefit greatly from support from the school counsellors and the chaplain. Those whose first language is not English and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported particularly well and make outstanding progress as a result. Students looked after by the local authority and other vulnerable students are also supported particularly well. Provision and support for gifted and talented students is now more focused and is helping to raise standards. The learning support unit provides very well for those students who experience difficulties in mainstream lessons through short term and structured placements. Attendance is above the national average, and there is a rising trend as a result of the school's effective steps to reduce absence and, in particular, unauthorised absence.

Senior leaders very effectively analyse information on attainment and progress against academic targets they set for students. This is complemented by excellent mentoring for students in Years 10 to 13 to help them achieve their targets. Building on this success, similar procedures have been introduced for students in Year 9. Targets set in individual education plans for those students with learning difficulties and disabilities are clear, concise and attainable and help teachers plan their lessons accordingly. Similarly, targets for those whose first language is not English are also very effective in this respect. Students are particularly appreciative of the information, advice and guidance in relation to the next stages of their education or career progression.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The executive headteacher has a clear vision for the school which is shared and supported by the students, staff and the governing body. The leadership of the headteacher is visionary and outstanding. This is demonstrated in the drive to establish 'The Learning Village' which has improved the education and life chances of the students in her care. The leadership of the sixth form is good. It has resulted in growing numbers of students, improved progress and take up of courses resulting in greater opportunities for further education and training. Effective action has been taken by the leadership team to bring about improvements in the areas reported at the time of the last inspection.

The school's assessment of its strengths and weaknesses is broadly accurate overall but lacks sufficient rigour in the identification of these. At subject level, middle leaders undertake self

review, but there remain inconsistencies in how effectively they recognise the priorities for development.

The extent to which the school promotes equal opportunities and inclusion of all learners is a central feature of its work. It has strengths in its provision for students with individual needs and places high value on the support and care of all students in a Christian and caring community.

Governance is very effective because governors work closely with the school and know precisely its strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the governing body has an excellent strategic overview and provides effective challenge and guidance for senior leaders.

The school's financial management is secure, budgets are tightly controlled and resources are well deployed overall to achieve good value for money.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	2	
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

17 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Bishop Challoner Catholic Collegiate Girls' School, London, E1 0AB

As you know, we have just finished inspecting your schools and we are writing to tell you our findings. First of all, we would like to thank you all for welcoming us to your school, for talking to us about your experiences in school and for letting us see your work. As a result of our inspection, we have found that yours is a good and improving school where your personal development is outstanding and where the care and guidance you are given is excellent.

The best features of the school are:

- the way the headteacher and staff have worked hard to raise examination results and help each of you to achieve well
- the standards of behaviour
- the friendly and caring atmosphere we found in the school
- the way the school helps students from different backgrounds and who speak different languages to mix together and learn well.

We know that while most of you and your parents are very happy with the school there are still things that could be better and your headteacher and teachers understand this too.

To become an even better school senior leaders need to:

- ensure that all lessons involve you in interesting work that fully challenges you
- improve the way that teachers plan the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 so that you can make even better progress
- ensure that teachers with special responsibilities really know and understand the strengths and priorities for development in their areas.

We were very impressed with your maturity and the way in which you are highly supportive of your headteacher and the whole school community. Keep it up! The school has worked hard to improve attendance and punctuality. We know this is difficult for some of you, but if you attend regularly and on time then this will enable you to be very successful in your education.

Yours sincerely

Asyia Kazmi

Her Majesty's Inspector