

Bishop Ullathorne Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103742
Local Authority	Coventry
Inspection number	308408
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Mary Davis

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	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	787
6th form	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Lee
Headteacher	Jane Byrne
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
School address	Leasowes Avenue Coventry CV3 6BH
Telephone number	02476 414515
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bishop Ullathorne Catholic School is an all-ability school, serving a diverse socio-economic area, taking pupils from all areas of Coventry. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is close to the national average, while those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is close to the national average and the percentage of those with English as an additional language is low. The school was awarded specialist college status in humanities in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Bishop Ullathorne is an improving catholic school that provides a good standard of education. Good teaching is having an impact on pupils' progress. Pupils' good achievement has resulted in standards which have risen steadily over the last three years, particularly in English. Progress in mathematics has been slower, largely as a result of staffing difficulties which have now been resolved. There is a calm atmosphere around the school, and pupils are polite and welcoming. 'I have always found pupils friendly and helpful when visiting the school,' and 'My children are so happy at Bishop Ullathorne,' are typical of the positive responses from parents.

Pupils' good spiritual and personal development is underpinned by the Christian ethos of the school and behaviour is good. Although most pupils attend regularly and evidently enjoy their education, there remain a persistent number of pupils whose attendance is poor.

Positive relationships based on mutual respect are evident in lessons. Pupils are keen to learn and particularly enjoy opportunities to undertake active tasks. Teachers ensure that pupils know their targets and how to achieve them and, as a result, lessons are purposeful and enable pupils to make good progress. Sometimes, however, teachers talk too much and miss opportunities for pupils to demonstrate what they know and share responsibility for their own learning. Some teachers fail to provide sufficient support for slower learners and challenge for the most able.

The school leadership has been quick to adapt the curriculum in response to under-achievement in key areas and provides a good range of learning opportunities for all pupils. There is now provision in Key Stage 4 for pupils to maximise their achievement in mathematics by taking a modular mathematics course, and some pupils are encouraged to take their GCSE in modern foreign languages and science in Year 10. These initiatives have helped to improve pupils' motivation and resulted in higher attainment.

A strong pastoral team provides good care for all pupils. As a result of efficient tracking of pupils' progress, teachers are able to intervene where underachievement is identified and provide additional support and guidance. Strategies to promote good attendance have been less effective.

Good leadership has ensured that all staff are involved in sharing responsibility for raising standards and achievement, and the school has taken rigorous steps to eradicate inadequate teaching. The impact of the humanities specialism is evident in the lead taken by humanities teachers in working to improve teaching and learning through the school improvement group.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good. Whilst students reach average standards overall, there has been a significant improvement in the numbers of students passing at the higher grades at A and AS levels in 2007 and students are now making good progress as a result of the good teaching they receive.

Sixth-form students enjoy coming to school and their personal development is good. They value the good relationships that they have with staff; as one said, 'We are pleased that staff trust us.' They appreciate the courses and activities provided, although some feel that there could be a wider choice of vocational subjects. This situation is improving. The school has

already extended the number of vocational courses by working with a consortium of local schools and firm plans are in place to develop the curriculum by offering media and physical educational courses.

The newly appointed head of sixth form provides good leadership and has made significant changes in the short time that he has been in post. For example, sixth-form students are very positive about the new role played by learning mentors in supporting and guiding them in improving their work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve levels of attendance.
- Improve standards and achievement in mathematics.
- Ensure that the individual needs of all groups of pupils are consistently met and that they are fully involved in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils join the school having reached average standards in national tests in English, mathematics and science in their previous schools. Although standards are broadly average at the end of Years 9 and 11 (Key Stages 3 and 4), they have improved over the last three years, and pupils are now making better progress than they have in the past. The school's latest data indicate further improvement this year and show that pupils are achieving well throughout the school, particularly in English. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is improving because of more stable and effective staffing. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory, but remains as a priority for development.

Key Stage 3 results in 2007 were in line with the national average. This group of pupils made greatest progress in English. Standards in English are continuing to improve and, overall, pupils are on track to exceed the school's challenging target for the proportion gaining Level 5 or above.

The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C has improved from significantly below the national average in 2005 to average in 2007. The school has made changes to the curriculum in response to weaknesses identified from the 2007 results. As a result of these changes and some early GCSE entries, the current Year 11 are on track to achieve the challenging targets set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils enjoy being at school and show positive attitudes in lessons because 'teachers are friendly and helpful and make lessons interesting'. Consequently, most attend well. Nevertheless, the level of attendance has remained below the national average over recent years, due to the poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils. Behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school. Bullying is rare and pupils confirm that, if it does happen, it is dealt with effectively by the staff. Pupils say they feel safe and are willing to go to any of the adults in school if they have a problem.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and show care and consideration for each other. The different responsibilities they have in school and the contacts with people in the local area lead to pupils gaining a good understanding of how a society should cooperate. Racial harmony amongst the pupils is good but the pupils have only limited opportunities to have direct contact with people from other cultures living and working in Britain. The pupils have a good understanding of healthy food and the benefits of exercise and they adopt safe practices in lessons. Their acquisition of basic skills makes a satisfactory preparation for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

In most lessons, good quality teaching leads to good learning. Teachers' subject knowledge and ability to model tasks effectively result in pupils' positive attitudes to their learning. Relationships are good and, as a result, pupils respect each other and their teachers, listening carefully and working well together in groups. In the best lessons, clear objectives and a well planned variety of exciting activities engage pupils and stimulate their imaginations, leading to good learning. In these lessons, tasks are carefully stepped to ensure that all abilities are able to achieve.

However, there is a small element of less inspiring teaching where lessons lack sufficient pace to motivate pupils fully. In these lessons, teachers tell pupils what to learn, rather than encouraging them to discover things for themselves. Sometimes, teachers fail to plan tasks sufficiently to support less able pupils and questions are not always sufficiently challenging to extend pupils' thinking, particularly for the most able. Written feedback on work does not consistently tell pupils clearly enough what they do well and what they need to do to improve.

The school is using its subject specialism well in order to challenge established ways of teaching and to engage all staff in debate as to what constitutes excellent teaching. This debate is enabling the school's teachers to draw on the ideas of other teachers. This has resulted, for example, in a focus on developing thinking skills in Years 7 and 8 which is enabling pupils to develop more independence in their learning. Teaching assistants support those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well, particularly those in the early stages of learning English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum provides pupils with a good range of learning opportunities, meeting National Curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9 and reflecting the humanities specialism through a focus on these subjects. Humanities specialist status has enhanced investment in information and communication technology resources that are used well across the curriculum.

In Years 9 to 11, all pupils study a modern foreign language and religious education alongside a good variety of GCSE subjects and vocational courses. The school has responded well to the needs of individual pupils by enabling less motivated linguists to take their GCSE a year early, enabling them to spend more time in Year 11 developing key skills. This has had a direct impact

on raising the achievement of these Year 11 pupils. The introduction of modular mathematics courses has also resulted in improved achievement.

The extra-curricular activities offered include a good range of well supported sports activities, and the curriculum is enriched by many educational visits. Sixth-form students value the visits to universities and a good variety of trips that support their studies.

The sixth-form curriculum does not currently provide sufficient vocational courses to meet the needs of all students, although new courses are planned for the next academic year.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school has good systems for promoting good behaviour and ensuring pupils' personal development. Well established procedures for child protection ensure pupils' health and safety. The school's efforts to persuade pupils and parents of the need for good attendance have had only limited success with a significant minority of families. The small minority of pupils who do not behave well has resulted in a large number of fixed term exclusions. This sends out a mixed message about the importance of attendance, raised as an issue in the last inspection report. The new leadership of the sixth form has ensured that the attendance of sixth-form students is good.

Recently introduced systems to track pupils' progress enable tutors to identify and support those who are underachieving. For all subjects, pupils and their parents know the levels that they are working at and what level they are targeted to achieve. Pupils are guided well towards their future pathways. The support given to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make good progress. Vulnerable pupils are supported well by the school in partnership with a variety of external agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher and the senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning and have reacted quickly to address under-achievement. Clear impact of their actions can be seen in rising standards and achievement, demonstrating a good capacity to improve.

School self-evaluation is accurate and involves contributions from all of the staff. There is a rigorous system for monitoring teaching and learning, connected to a robust system of performance management for teaching staff. These systems are linked to well structured opportunities for professional development for teaching and non-teaching staff.

The role played by middle managers in raising standards has improved. They are held responsible for the performance of their areas by the senior leadership team and they, in turn, hold others accountable. Significant improvements have also been made in the use of data to identify students who are underachieving and to set challenging targets for future improvements.

The governors are well informed and supportive of the work of the school, providing good links with members of the wider community. The school manages its finances carefully and has recently received national recognition for the financial systems that are in place.

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.

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?	2	2
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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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	3	

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	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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	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	2	2
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	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

28 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bishop Ullathorne Catholic School, Coventry, CV3 6BH

My colleagues and I enjoyed our visit to your school. We were particularly impressed with the welcome you gave us and appreciated your help in enabling us to find our way around the school. We know that many of you really value the education you receive and are determined to make the best of the opportunities available to you. Our main findings are:

- Standards throughout the school are close to the national average, but there are clear signs that you are working hard to improve. You progress well in English, but not so well in mathematics.
- The school's Catholic ethos is helping you to develop as a caring community. You behave well and respect your teachers and each other. We are concerned, however, by the poor attendance of some of you.
- The good teaching you receive is resulting in you learning well and you are showing that you can think for yourselves .
- The curriculum that you follow is good and is being developed further to enable you to follow your own interests.
- The care you receive is good and you are well supported in your learning so that you know what you are aiming for and how to achieve your targets.
- The leadership is working hard to ensure that you continue to improve and that the teaching you receive will enable you to succeed.

All of the above applies to the sixth form as well as the main school. In order to take your learning to new heights, we have asked the school to seek ways in which they can implement more innovative ways of teaching, taking greater account of your different abilities and that you share responsibility with teachers for your own learning. We particularly want them to ensure that you progress well in mathematics and that your attendance levels improve. You can play your part by attending regularly, by making your views known on what works best and by responding with maturity and enthusiasm to the school's efforts to make your school even better.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Mary Davis

Lead inspector

Annex B

28 February 2008

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