

Bellerive FCJ Catholic College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104709
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	308656
Inspection date	8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Gina White 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	893
6th form	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pamela Thornton
Headteacher	Sr Brigid Halligan
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2004
School address	Windermere Terrace Sefton Park Liverpool Merseyside L8 3SB
Telephone number	0151 7272064
Fax number	0151 7278242

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Introduction

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

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the college and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; students' personal development, well-being and care; the quality of curriculum provision; the progress of vulnerable students and those in the sixth form; and the college's use of self-evaluation. Evidence was gathered from: the college's self-evaluation form; national published assessment data and the college's own assessment records; a range of college documentation; observation of the college at work; discussions with staff and students; and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the college's work were not investigated in detail, but there is no evidence to suggest that the college's own evaluations, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The college is a voluntary aided comprehensive school for girls aged 11 to 18, with boys accepted into the sixth form. The school serves an area of high disadvantage in Liverpool and 41% of students are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is below the national average and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. The majority of students are White British, with over 22% of students from a diverse range of Black and minority ethnic groups. The number of students for whom English is not their first language is small; 24 are at early stages of learning English. The college is in its fourth year of specialist science college status. The college gained healthy school status in July 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Bellerive FCJ is an outstanding college. This is a college where every child matters and it is highly successful in its aims to enable students to achieve their best. Students respond extremely well to its supportive family atmosphere: they reach above-average standards and achieve exceptionally well in their learning and personal development. The vast majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire are highly supportive of the college and value the commitment and hard work of staff and the role they play in helping their daughters to become happy and confident learners.

Standards and achievement have improved rapidly since the last inspection. The majority of students enter the college with attainment broadly in line with that found nationally, although very few students attain the highest levels in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the national average in 2006. Results from national tests in 2007 show significant improvement, particularly in English, which is a consistently strong subject in the school, and in science, the school's specialist subject. Students go on to reach above-average standards at the end of Key Stage 4 and a strong record of improving standards and achievement is established. Results in 2007 continue this trend. For example, 82% of students achieved five or more GCSEs at the higher A* to C grades; 52% gained these grades in English and mathematics. In addition, 71% of students gained qualifications in functional English and mathematics. All students, including those with LDD, Black and minority ethnic students and the small numbers of students who are at early stages of learning English, make very good progress during Years 10 and 11 and many achieve exceptionally well, given their starting points on entry to the college. Almost all students continue into education, employment and training.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The great majority of students clearly enjoy college life and this is reflected in their high take-up of an extensive range of activities and clubs and in their participation in Saturday morning lessons and study sessions. Healthy lifestyles are firmly promoted in the college. Consequently, students have a good understanding of the importance of diet and fitness and some note positively the changes they have made to their diet and lifestyle at home. Longstanding issues of attendance and punctuality are beginning to improve. Small numbers of students with persistent absence are beginning to attend more regularly. The college met its attendance target last year and attendance has risen further in the last few months to 92.9%. Recent developments in this respect are now part of the college's procedures but the improvement, in the long term, has yet to be sustained and secured. The vast majority of students behave exceptionally well around the college and in lessons to meet the high standards of behaviour expected of them. Students say they feel safe in college. They listen attentively to health and safety instructions and act safely in lessons and around the college. This is no mean feat given the complexities of the college site. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and the Christian ethos of the college is very well reflected in the high proportion of students prepared to take responsibility and work on behalf of the college and wider community. For example, students raise extensive funds for charities and work with their sister schools across the world to support work to alleviate poverty. Wide-ranging social and cultural opportunities, together with excellent resources, contribute significantly to students' achievement and willingness to learn. Many students rate them as the best feature of the college and many parents also endorsed this view.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Subject leaders and senior managers make regular checks to assure its quality and identify good practice. Lessons are typified by teachers' good planning and management of learning, their high expectations and students' engagement and willingness to learn. A consistent emphasis on challenge and progress is a feature of the best lessons. Students know their learning targets and understand how to improve their work as a result of regular meetings with teachers to review their progress. Recently purchased computers and interactive whiteboards are used well in lessons and underpin developments to extend students' independent learning and thinking skills.

Curriculum provision is outstanding and is carefully monitored and adapted to ensure it remains relevant and meets the needs of all students. Recent developments, enabling students to take examinations when they are ready, are proving successful: 98% of Year 10 students achieved GCSE English in 2007 and 63% achieved the higher A* to C grades. A wealth of enrichment opportunities, many developed through excellent partnership links, contribute extensively to developing students' confidence and engagement in learning. Students willingly respond to projects and enterprise activities with local businesses; both are enhanced by the college's science specialism, and they prepare them extremely well for securing economic well-being.

The learning and care needs and interests of all groups of students are met very well. Students receive outstanding advice, guidance and support. Induction arrangements on entry to the college and at key transition points are excellent. Year 7 students settle quickly to college life and older students are well prepared to move onto the next stage in learning. Record-keeping procedures, relating to staff qualifications, do not comply with current requirements for safeguarding learners. Children who are in care, those who have LDD and students who have recently arrived in this country and who are at early stages of learning English receive very good and well coordinated support to meet their needs.

Leadership and management are outstanding and improvement since the last inspection is firmly demonstrated. The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors demonstrate a deep commitment to the college and provide a clear set of priorities to guide its development. Specialist status is well managed and has had a considerable impact across the college, for example, in the extensive work to improve the use of information and communication technology by staff and students. This in turn has helped to raise achievement and standards. Improvement targets are consistently met and the college manages its resources effectively and provides exceptionally good value for money. The college's capacity for further improvement is very good and underpinned by accurate self-evaluation and good budget management.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. In recent years it has grown steadily and more students are choosing to take science courses. Results in 2007 confirm that a trend of improvement is established, although standards are below the national average. Most of the vulnerable students, including the small number of students who are in care, make good progress and achieve well. The tracking of students' progress is finely focused on those who underachieve. The sixth-form curriculum is good. The college draws effectively on its collaborative partnership with three other faith schools, enabling students to select from an extensive range of academic AS and A-level courses and a smaller range of popular vocational courses to meet their interests and needs. Relatively few students choose to take full advantage of this wide choice and study at other schools. Provision of Level 2 courses has improved but remains narrow and plans to extend the range to meet the demand for more variety and choice are in hand. New appointments

and facilities for learning, extensive enrichment activities and an enhanced focus on developing students' thinking and research skills are contributing to raise students' confidence, interest and achievement. Attendance is improving. The good personal development and provision for care and curriculum reflect good overall leadership and management. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. Leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses but judgements about the impact of the colleges' work on standards students reach are insufficiently based on evidence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure recent improvement in attendance is secured.
- Ensure a single record for criminal record bureau checks includes the qualifications of staff.

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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?	1	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	1	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	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	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	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?	1	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?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
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?	No	No
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

Inspection of Bellerive FCJ Catholic College, Liverpool, L8 3SB

Thank you for making me welcome during the recent inspection of your college and for answering my questions. Please pass on my thanks to your parents for taking the trouble to complete the questionnaires. Here are the findings of the inspection.

- Bellerive is an outstanding college and it provides you with an excellent education. The atmosphere at your school is really special; it is clear that you enjoy learning and are proud to be there. Some of you told me that it was 'like a family'. Your headteacher and senior staff lead the school very well indeed. Together with the staff they work hard to help you do your best. Many of you are making very good progress and by the end of Year 11 you reach above-average standards.
- You are polite and friendly and your behaviour and attitudes to learning are first rate.
- The curriculum is outstanding and some of you said that the best thing about the college is the additional learning opportunities you are provided with, through the extensive range of activities and clubs. For example, some of you enjoyed recent retreat and many of you participate in Saturday morning lessons and study sessions.
- You have a very good understanding of the importance of diet and fitness and some of you have begun to make changes to your diet and lifestyle at home.
- The sixth form is good overall. It is well led and results are steadily improving, although not as firmly so as in the main school. Sixth-form students make good progress.

College leaders have a good understanding of what needs to be done to make Bellerive even better. I have asked them to do two things:

- to embed the new strategies securely to ensure the recent good attendance continues through the year - you can help by attending school consistently and being on time to your lessons;
- to make sure that they improve record keeping and maintain a single record of criminal record bureau checks to include the qualifications of staff.

Thank you for your contribution to this inspection and best wishes for your future.