

# The Bishops' Blue Coat Church of England High School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111455
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	310603
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sue Harrison 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1053
6th form	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Walter Done OBE
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Justin Blakebrough
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 September 2004
<b>School address</b>	Vaughans Lane Great Boughton Chester Cheshire CH3 5XF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01244 313806
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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

The Bishops' Blue Coat is the only Church of England high school in the local authority and therefore serves a wide catchment area. Students come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and the school caters for students with a wide range of ability. Overall, students enter the school with attainment levels slightly above the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is increasing. Although it is still below the national average, the number of students with a statement of additional needs is above average. There is a pupil support centre for those in need of extra academic and pastoral support. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The school gained specialist status in science in 2004. The local community makes extensive use of the school's sporting and other facilities.

## 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 school. Students' achievements are rising year on year. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was well above the national average in 2007. Results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are also above average. The majority of students make good progress. The school is taking action to address the underperformance in 2007 at GCSE of students of slightly less than average ability. This includes changes to the curriculum and better tracking of the performance of these students, leading to increased support. There is some evidence that these measures are working but it is too early to evaluate fully their impact. The school recognises the need to keep a close eye on these developments.

Teaching and learning are good. The impact of the school's specialism is successfully helping staff across a range of subjects to use teaching and learning methods that meet the needs of the range of students in classes. This includes effective use of information technology in many lessons. Students' work is assessed well by some teachers, but some staff do not make it clear how work can be improved. Inspectors agree with one of the school's priorities, which is to spread good practice in the assessment of students' work.

The school has a welcoming, inclusive ethos. Students' personal development is good, and in the sixth form it is outstanding. The school is successful at helping young people to respect others and contribute to society. It shows them that their opinions are valued. The vast majority respond by showing positive attitudes to their learning, they behave well and are developing a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Students say they feel safe in the school. The care, guidance and support students receive are good. The curriculum has been improved in recent years and is good. Students are being well prepared for higher education or the world of work.

Leadership and management are good. The senior leadership team has a very clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school. Monitoring of performance is thorough and there is an increasing emphasis on spreading good practice between departments. Parents are generally very supportive. A minority of parents identify issues they are concerned about, such as the impact of staff changes and the poor behaviour of a small number of students. Governors carry out their responsibilities well; they provide good levels of support and challenge. The school works well with a range of external partners to enhance the quality of education it offers. Financial management is effective and the school provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Students in the sixth form receive a good education and generally make good progress against their starting points. Examination results have improved since the last inspection and are above average overall. The students' personal development is outstanding. This is a close-knit community of students who display a strong sense of responsibility. They make a huge contribution to the life of the school. They are excellent role models for younger students and give them considerable help through mentoring activities and assisting in school clubs. They are proud of their school and their role in it. Their good use of private study time underlines the progress they make in becoming effective independent learners. They value the good personal, academic and careers guidance that they receive. The rate of course completion is

high. This confirms the good quality guidance students receive in Year 11, and how well the curriculum meets their needs. A high proportion of students enter higher education or training.

The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. Students work hard in lessons. They like the lively nature of many lessons and value their teachers' subject expertise. The school's monitoring notes that a minority of lessons are less effective when the learners have to spend too much time listening to the teacher. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. There are robust systems for tracking progress against examination targets, backed up by effective additional help where appropriate. However, the evaluation of examination results and the setting of targets are not yet sufficiently guided by comparisons with national measures.

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

- Monitor the effectiveness of actions being taken to ensure all students achieve their full potential.
- Improve the assessment of students' work by making sure all teachers adopt the best practice already being used by some.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pupils' achievement is good. The standard of students' work is above average. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen from slightly below the national average in 2005 to well above in 2007. The majority of students make good progress by the end of Year 11. Some students of slightly less than average ability did not achieve their full potential in 2007. The school is clear about the reasons for this and actions are in place to address the issue. These are starting to show some positive impact.

Results in the Key Stage 3 national assessments in 2006 were not as good as previous years, especially in English. The school has taken effective action to address this; results in 2007 were above the national average and students are now progressing well in English, science and mathematics.

There has been significant improvement in subjects that were identified as underperforming at the last inspection. Students' progress in the school's specialist subjects is good.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They develop respect for each other and for staff. Students have a good awareness of cultural diversity through work done in curriculum areas such as religious education, art and drama, and this is enhanced by a variety of international links. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good although there are pockets of poor behaviour by a small minority of students. Students enjoy their time in the school and say they feel safe and that any allegations of bullying, racism or poor behaviour are taken seriously and dealt with effectively. Students' understanding of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles is well developed

through personal, social, citizenship and health education (PSCHE), which is enriched by visiting experts from external agencies. The school council provides good opportunities for students to express their views on policies and staff appointments, as well as on practical matters like lockers and uniform changes. Students take on additional responsibilities, contributing well to the school, local and wider communities. They act as sports coaches, buddies and peer mentors as well as supporting curriculum links with primary and special schools, developed through the school's specialist status. Students provide entertainment and food for a local senior citizens group and perform concerts within the community, as well as fundraising for a number of causes. Work-related learning is good and students are well prepared for future education and employment.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. In the majority of lessons teachers are very skilful at planning activities that will meet the needs of the range of ability in the group. They use resources that are interesting, and make increasingly effective use of information technology. Students respond well in these lessons. Most of them work hard and participate well. They contribute ideas and ask searching questions. Teachers use an interesting variety of methods to check their understanding. However, a minority of lessons are less successful. Sometimes this is due to changes in staff, where teachers do not know the students well and the lesson does not meet their needs effectively. In a few lessons teachers do not give students enough time to think for themselves and their attention wanders.

Most teachers assess students' work regularly. The school is working hard to develop its assessment practices and some staff are very skilled at giving specific help to students so they know how to improve their work. However, the quality of assessment varies too much and there is scope for further sharing of good practice in this area.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is good. It is becoming increasingly flexible to meet the needs of individual students. In Key Stage 3, the curriculum allows students to be taught in sets of similar ability in English, mathematics and science and in some other subjects where the school judges it improves progress. There is good provision for pupils' personal, social, cultural and health education (PSCHE); this is much improved since the last inspection. PSCHE is partly taught through drama, where students respond confidently, using dramatic situations and techniques to explore relevant themes and issues. At Key Stage 4, a broad range of academic courses, together with a number of vocational options, is available, and the specialism in science has allowed students to take a wider range of separate sciences. All students take early entry for religious studies GCSE. Early entry in other subjects is limited. Plans are in place for 2008 to develop the personalised range of curriculum pathways further. Students' progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is given a high priority. Work-related learning is well established and enterprise education is supported through special events, with

outside speakers and a good range of activities to develop work-related skills. Community involvement through the school's specialism has increased and local primary schools, university and further education colleges are all involved with regular science-based programmes and initiatives. There is very good extra-curricular provision across a broad range of sports, arts and enrichment activities and pupil participation is high.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school provides good care, guidance and support for students. An extremely dedicated team of staff offer effective support for vulnerable students and those at risk of disaffection. There is a strong system to enable the smooth transition of students from the many different primary schools. There are appropriate guidance programmes to enable Year 11 students to make informed choices post-16. Good guidance for Year 9 students has been developed in the light of the increased number of pathways on offer. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and there are additional activities for those who are gifted or talented. Students generally feel valued and cared for and a Year 9 pupil spoke enthusiastically about the school, describing it as 'Brilliant Bishops.' The school has introduced a system of mentoring for those students who are underachieving, including individual interviews between senior staff and Year 11 students. There are appropriate arrangements in place for safeguarding students' welfare and safety. The school's health and safety policy and risk assessments meet current government requirements and are well monitored.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a clear vision for the school, which is based on an ethos of inclusion and success. The senior leadership team has a strong focus on raising standards and achievement. The school's specialism is led well and is increasingly impacting on whole-school standards and opportunities for students. The process of self-evaluation is rigorous and thorough, giving leaders and managers an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has enabled the leadership team to establish clear priorities to move the school to the next stage in its development. There is a strong commitment to developing capacity and shared leadership across the school and a range of professional development opportunities is available for staff.

Middle leaders are increasingly held accountable for departmental performance and regular meetings between senior leaders and middle leaders ensure that improvement planning is regularly monitored and reviewed. The process includes a detailed annual analysis of external examination results and performance data, and a cycle of regular, formal reviews of each department by the leadership team. Monitoring of teaching and learning is now well established and has led to more consistently good teaching. This in turn has brought about improvements in examination results.

The school has good systems in place to track students' progress. It recognised that intervention had not always happened quickly enough to improve performance, and this has been improved

in the current year. The school generally uses target setting effectively as a means of leveraging up performance and is setting increasingly challenging targets. Within the sixth form, analysis of results leading to target setting is not sufficiently linked to national data.

Governors make an effective contribution to the leadership and management of the school. They know the school well and are actively involved in monitoring its progress through the links they have with subject departments. They are very committed to the school and carry out their responsibilities well, providing support and challenge in equal measure. Financial management is effective and the school provides 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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	1
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	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?	2	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	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	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	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**

Inspection of The Bishops' Blue Coat Church of England High School, Chester, CH3 5XF

As you know, your school was recently inspected. Thank you for your warm welcome and your help in finding our way around and giving us your views about the school. We really enjoyed visiting your school and I am writing now to tell you about our findings.

We think that The Bishops' Blue Coat is a good school. It has a welcoming atmosphere and encourages respect for individuals. Most of you enjoy school, you behave well and make good progress. Examination results have improved year on year and are generally good. We were impressed by opportunities for you to get involved in how the school is run. We enjoyed listening to your ideas in lessons and in the school council meeting I attended. You work hard in most lessons and the standard of work you produce is good. In a few lessons, some students lose interest and are unable to complete the work. Your work is assessed well by some teachers, but sometimes you are not clear what to do to improve further. The curriculum on offer is increasingly meeting your individual needs and interests and we think you are well prepared for the next stage of your lives. We were also impressed by the number of you who take part in activities outside lessons and in the way you help other people within the school and in the local community. This was particularly outstanding in the sixth form. You told us that you receive good levels of guidance and support and some older students said this had improved recently.

The school is well led and managed. You and your parents are generally very supportive of the school, though there are a few aspects you are less happy with, such as the impact of staff absence or changes, and the disruptive effect of the behaviour of a small minority of students. We think the senior leadership team is good at assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the school. In further improving the school, we have asked them to:

- ensure students of all ability levels reach their full potential
- spread good practice in the way teachers assess your work to help you understand how to learn better and improve further.