

Peterlee St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114327
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311570
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Hancock 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	970
6th form	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Joe Raine
Headteacher	Mr Paul McKenna
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2003
School address	Westway Peterlee County Durham SR8 1DE
Telephone number	0191 5862291
Fax number	0191 5861382

Age group	11-19
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2007
Inspection number	311570

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Peterlee St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Byron Sixth Form College is a specialist Humanities College located in the suburbs of an industrial town with above average levels of deprivation. Sixth form provision is the result of local collaboration between the school and six 11-16 schools in South East Durham linked with East Durham & Houghall Further Education College. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Bede's is a satisfactory and improving school and Humanities College. It was satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection in 2003. The performance of the school declined and action was taken to make improvements. The strong leadership of a new headteacher working closely with the local authority and governors has steered the school back on course.

Students make satisfactory progress and achieve well. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. The proportion of good teaching is rising and assessment systems are working more effectively. The school knows that more good teaching is needed to underpin further improvement and has made raising the quality of teaching and learning a key priority.

Results have improved from 43% of students in 2005 gaining higher GCSE grades to 58% in 2007. A similar improvement can be seen in the GCSE results including English and mathematics, from 37% in 2006 to 44% in 2007 which meets statutory targets. Specialist status has made an impact, improving classrooms and raising achievement. English results in Year 9 are not as high as they should be and the school is taking the right action to make improvements. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Attendance has risen from below average to above average in the last two years. Behaviour is good, a direct result of the school recently driving performance in the right direction. Personal development is good and the students are effectively guided and supported. They are well cared for, enjoy learning, and feel safe. The curriculum is good, particularly the range and breadth of vocational courses. The vast majority of parents taking part in surveys feel their children are safe and well cared for.

The overall quality of leadership, management and governance is satisfactory. Good leadership by the headteacher is making sure managers at all levels are being challenged and brought to account. The governing body continues to move the school forward and capacity to improve is satisfactory. The school knows itself well and is taking the right action to make improvements. More sophisticated procedures which help the school to understand the progress pupils can make have recently been introduced. Resources and accommodation are effectively deployed to achieve satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The number of students in the sixth form is rising as the reputation improves. Standards are average and rising, and achievement is satisfactory. They start in the sixth form with often quite modest GCSE results. The help and guidance they receive result in most of them successfully completing the wide range of A-level and vocational courses they take. Students who are not ready to embark upon courses at this level take the opportunity to link vocational studies to key GCSE subjects such as English and mathematics.

Students speak enthusiastically about their experiences in the sixth form and recognise the level of individual support they receive is good. They behave as mature young adults whose attitudes in lessons are good. Recreational facilities provided for them, especially at lunchtime, are under pressure with increasing numbers of students.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are satisfactory. Lessons are well geared towards the courses being studied but they do not always actively engage all of the students. A variety of

approaches and good pace are features of the better lessons. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The school has a clear view on the progress that students are making, communicates this to them well, and gives them good personal support. The school knows there is still work to be done in deciding how best to set their academic targets.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sustain the year on year improvement in achievement and standards, particularly in English at Key Stage 3.
- Improve the proportion of good and excellent teaching and learning.
- Improve the quality and impact of self-evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards when students join the school are average. They make satisfactory progress and achieve average results by the end of Year 11. Standards reached by students aged 14 between 2004 and 2006 were significantly below average. In 2007, results improved, particularly in mathematics and science. In English, students still do not make the progress they should and results are below average.

GCSE results have risen in the last two years and school data indicate the trend will continue. Specialist school provision has significantly helped with the rising trend in performance. In 2007, 58% of students achieved higher GCSE grades and challenging targets were met. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) made satisfactory progress. The progress of students with statements of special educational need is more rapid as a result of the dedicated support provided by teaching assistants and specialist teachers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development is good and the school provides much support in a socially deprived area. Students are well cared for, enjoy learning, and feel safe. Students say they enjoy school and parents confirm this view. The students know what they have to do to stay safe. For example, effective and shared internet policies are in place to safeguard students using computers. They are also aware of safe practice in classrooms, laboratories, and workshops. Students know who they can turn to for help if there is a problem.

The students' spiritual, moral and social development is good and can be seen, for example, in assemblies. The cultural education of the students is less well developed, but is satisfactory. Students are aware they need to stay healthy and the school provides a range of healthy choices.

Behaviour has improved and is good in lessons and around the school. Attendance has improved. It is now above average and the number of exclusions has been reduced. Unauthorised absence is high, and the school is working closely with the education welfare officer to deal with the root causes.

Students take part in the many opportunities to support the school and the community through, for example, sports leadership, links with the Roman Catholic Church, the Salvation Army, and raising money for charity. The school council has become more effective in the past three years. It makes positive contributions to school life such as the development of the behaviour policy and the lunchtime provision for Year 7.

Very few students leave Year 11 without continuing with their education or securing work. The school acknowledges that low literacy levels gained by some students can compromise economic well-being, and plans to improve basic skills are now in place. It is too early to judge their impact.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. A more consistent approach to planning lessons has been implemented across the school and the structure of lessons is improving. Teaching has a sharper focus on learning in the best lessons and teachers expect students to achieve better results.

When the pace of learning is slower, teachers spend too much time on explanations and activities lack a range of tasks aimed at different abilities. As a result, some students finish tasks early and their progress is limited because they are waiting for the rest of the class to catch up. Students know how well they are doing and their targets. Routine marking of work does not consistently tell them how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good because it is closely matched to the full range of student needs, largely as a result of recent improvements. The choice of vocational courses has increased at Key Stage 4 in partnership with other local schools, the FE College and industry. For example, there is an active partnership with an international engineering company and the range of vocational courses includes engineering and retail choices.

The curriculum has been further strengthened with a greater emphasis on literacy and numeracy but these have yet to impact on standards. The 'Student Personal Development' programme provides good support on transfer from primary school. It prepares students well for the future, contributes to their good personal development, and includes a good balance of personal, social and health education. The school offers a wide range of extra curricular activities, particularly in sport and music, which are well-supported by students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. The consistently applied 'CALM programme' helps students to work in a purposeful and mutually respectful environment. There

is an ongoing parental complaint with regard to a health and safety issue concerning an incident in 2005. Evidence provided to inspectors showed that the school has all the necessary safeguarding procedures in place.

The school has a comprehensive and well managed tracking system. Students are aware of their targets but are less secure about what they have to do to reach them. The system identifies students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are experiencing difficulties and appropriate intervention is put in place to help and support them. External agencies, including a chaplain, school counsellor, and the behaviour support team work in a coordinated way to support the students. Careers education and guidance are satisfactory and the amount of time devoted to this has increased.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The overall quality of leadership, management and governance is satisfactory. Good leadership by the recently appointed headteacher, who is supported by an effective leadership team, is making sure managers at all levels are being challenged and brought to account. The headteacher has a clear vision for St. Bede's and has vigorously set an appropriate agenda for change and development. This is based on an accurate evaluation of the school's performance. He has communicated his vision effectively to staff at all levels. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and the atmosphere for learning is good.

Capacity to improve is satisfactory. Training programmes and support from the local authority have helped governors, leaders and managers to become more effective in improving the quality of education. Underperforming areas have been clearly identified and their leaders have targets for improvement which are rigorously monitored by senior staff. Governance has improved and is satisfactory. Governors have an increasing understanding of the school's academic performance and there are many instances of challenge where they believe that there are shortcomings.

The effectiveness of recent changes to procedures is clearly evident through the improving standards in the school following a decline in 2004 and 2005, and in the good attitudes displayed by the students. Staff morale is good because channels of communication have recently improved and expectations have become clear. There is a shared recognition that the quality of education has recently improved.

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.

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
---	----------------	-------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
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	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

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

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?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Peterlee St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School, Durham, SR8 1DE

Thank you for all your help when I inspected the school with my colleagues on 26 and 27 November. Please would you pass on my thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires and say we took all their views into account. I thought you might like to know what we thought about your school.

- The school has improved and the headteacher is steering the school in the right direction very well.
- Results are much better and you are achieving more highly.
- You attend more regularly and your attitudes to learning have improved.
- Personal development is good and you are effectively guided and supported.
- The curriculum is good, particularly the wide range of courses you are offered.
- The number of students in the sixth form is growing and standards are rising.

Your teachers and the staff work very hard and want to make the school even better. To help them do this, I have asked if they could:

- Sustain the year on year improvement in achievement and standards, particularly in English at Key Stage 3.
- Improve the proportion of good and excellent teaching and learning.
- Improve the quality and impact of self-evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels.

You can help by continuing to behave well and aiming high with what you want to achieve. I wish you every success in all you do in the future. It is well deserved.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector