

Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116999
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	312473
Inspection date	11 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Brian Cartwright 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1054
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter McHugh
Headteacher	Sean Devlin
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Timberdine Avenue Worcester WR5 2XD
Telephone number	01905 352615
Fax number	01905 763041

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspector and an Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support and leadership and management, gathering evidence from staff discussion, documentation, scrutiny of pupils work and meeting with pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments of these aspects, as given its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This school is a specialist mathematics and computing college, serving the city of Worcester and wider areas to the south and west of the city. A majority of pupils come from Catholic families, with many pupils from other faiths. The socio-economic backgrounds of most pupils are better than average. There are a relatively high proportion of pupils from backgrounds other than White British, although this is in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with average. The school has full access for learners with disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Blessed Edward Oldcorne is a good school, thanks to the careful and caring professionalism of teachers and staff. Immediately apparent to visitors, including inspectors, is the warm and friendly ethos evident in enthusiastic conversations between staff, visitors and pupils. The clear call of the gospel to value every individual in the school was exemplified by morning prayers shared with all staff, setting the tone for the day, and reminding staff of their duty of care and consideration.

Although safely housing over a thousand pupils and more than a hundred adults, the school itself feels small. Indeed, some of its corridors and classrooms are small, but the school has remodelled its buildings and routines well to resolve congestion at lesson changes. The 'small school family' feel has been systematically established by outstanding leadership and direction from the headteacher and his senior team, beginning with excellent arrangements to promote effective transition from primary to secondary school. The 'tutor' system ensures every pupil has one staff member who knows that child well, and this personal care is reinforced by well structured support and training for tutors. New staff are also very well supported, and swiftly identify with the school's mission.

The breadth of study options for Years 10 and 11, coupled with a very extensive range of well supported additional activities, testifies to an outstanding curriculum. Almost every pupil is engaged in some kind of additional activity on a week by week basis. Pupils enjoy school, demonstrate good social and moral qualities, and have some outstanding opportunities for spiritual and cultural development including international visits. The pupils raise a considerable amount of money each year in support of a wide range of charities. Attendance is very high for a secondary school and serious disciplinary incidents very rare. Behaviour management recognises the need for a level of forgiveness as well as sanctions in a Christian community.

The behaviour of pupils is good and pupils enjoy open access to the school at breaktimes. Generally, they respect this privilege, although there are instances of good natured boisterous behaviour despite close supervision, and a fair bit of litter suggests not all pupils are clearing up after themselves. The school has good pupil council arrangements that ensure pupils are involved in decisions on school life. Most Year 11 pupils serve as prefects. Pupils say they feel safe and that any instances of bullying are dealt with swiftly. Almost every parent or carer who responded to the inspection survey agreed that their children enjoyed school and that pupils behaved well.

Pupils arrive at the school with above average standards. The good overall achievement of pupils is evident in at least above, and sometimes well above, average performance measures at Key Stage 4. The school has prioritised Key Stage 4 in recent years, which has led to a significant rise in standards for Year 11 since the previous inspection, representing very good progress during this key stage. But Key Stage 3 has not matched this rise in standards, so the progress pupils make between Year 7 and Year 9 is satisfactory rather than good. This is partly due to staffing challenges in English and mathematics in recent years, which have had more impact at Key Stage 3, but these have now been resolved. Most groups of learners make good progress. There remain some weaknesses for girls of middle and lower ability at Key Stage 3, and the legacy of difficulties in mathematics is still evident in its satisfactory, rather than good, performance in 2007. The additional resources of specialist status are helping to increase staffing in mathematics.

Teaching is securely good, characterised by good pace and positive relationships between staff and pupils in most lessons. The most able pupils are well challenged by expert teachers. Lesson plans conform to the '4 part lesson' model of the school, but none contained systematic prompts to consider differing pupil ability or prior knowledge. Different subjects have different planning expectations. The best expected teachers to consider both academic learning objectives and personal skill development opportunities, as well as numeracy, literacy and spiritual opportunities. Inspectors saw examples of excellent assessment in much of the work of pupils, but sometimes this advice was not taken by pupils, or followed up by staff. Information and communication technology (ICT) plays an important part in delivering teaching, and pupils acquire very good ICT skills during their time at the school; almost all of them gain the equivalent of 3 GCSE higher grades in ICT. This has been facilitated through the funding of specialist status.

The care and support for vulnerable learners is outstanding. These pupils do very well at the school thanks to the careful and skilled support of teachers and specialist support staff. The school ensures good academic and social development for them, and can point to many examples of successful transition to adult life. The overall picture for care, guidance and support for all pupils is good. The guidance for pupils in day to day marking and in annual reports is too variable and, consequently, pupils do not always receive clear advice on how to improve. Child protection procedures are in place and pupils know to whom they can turn in a crisis. The school has consulted pupils from different heritage backgrounds on how they feel about their education, and is close to being able to summarise these views for governors as part of an equality impact assessment.

Leadership and management overall are good. There is no question that the improvements in standards since the previous inspection have been driven by the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. He has enabled and supported senior staff in establishing higher expectations and a growing culture of ambitious targets, beginning with Key Stage 4. This ambition and focus is now extending to Key Stage 3. The approach to systematically teaching key personal skills of resourcefulness, resilience, responsibility, reflection, and reasoning is helpful, although its consistency varies. This echo of some inconsistency in the monitoring and application of day to day school policy, such as in marking and lesson planning, is consistent with some satisfactory elements of middle management

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency of practice in day to day marking across the school so that all learners get explicit advice on how to improve their work.
- Check that pupils follow the regular advice, then ensure formal reports also contain explicit subject improvement detail, not merely exhortations to revise.
- Further raise expectation and challenge for pupils at Key Stage 3 to reach aspirational academic targets

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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
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

13 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College, Worcester WR5 2XD

Thank you for your time and the enthusiastic conversations we had when we visited your school recently. Your views helped us to confirm that you attend a good school, which provides you with an excellent range of opportunities for study and development of your skills. You make good progress during your time at school and we are pleased that almost all of you take part in the additional activities on offer, such as sports, arts, revision sessions and a wide range of trips and visits. The school ensures you have an effective voice about issues affecting your day to day enjoyment of life, such as changes to uniform, and improvements in the movement around the school. Your efforts for charitable work are outstanding.

Teachers and support staff are dedicated to ensuring you achieve as well as you should. They take seriously the school's commitment to gospel values, and try to make sure every pupil is equally valued. This has created an excellent working ethos that is founded on respect and consideration for one another. The staff trust you to behave well throughout the school, and give you access to classrooms at lunchtimes. Do take care to honour that trust, for example by picking up your own or other people's litter.

The school is good, but wants to be even better, and we think three things might help it improve. Firstly, the way teachers mark work should be consistent in every lesson so you have clear guidance on what to do to improve. Secondly, you can make this count by carrying out their advice, which teachers can then check. Thirdly, particularly for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, teachers should set you quite challenging academic targets because we think you are capable of reaching higher.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright Her Majesty's Inspector



13 December 2007

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Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Cartwright'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector