

St Bede's Catholic School: A Mathematics and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118119
Local Authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	312816
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Cathryn Kirby 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	684
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Mary Readhead
Headteacher	Mrs Michelle Travers
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2004
School address	Collum Avenue Scunthorpe DN16 2TF
Telephone number	01724 861371
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Bede's Catholic School is a smaller than average, mixed, 11 to 16, Roman Catholic comprehensive school situated in the south east suburbs of Scunthorpe. The large majority of students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. A fifth of students have a learning difficulty and/or disability. The percentage of students who have a statement of special education need has increased since the last inspection and is now slightly above the average. Very few students are entitled to free school meals. The percentage of students who enter or leave the school other than at age 11 is below average.

The school is voluntary aided and holds specialist status in mathematics and computing. St Bede's holds the healthy school award. The school has been awarded the arts mark and the sports mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards reached by students in mathematics and at the end of Key Stage 3.

Provision at St Bede's is underpinned by a distinctive Catholic ethos that reflects the school's values of love, respect and service. Visitors are struck by the calm and welcoming atmosphere. Students are polite and courteous to teachers and visitors. Constructive relationships between members of the school community are founded on mutual respect. Students' spiritual, social and moral development is a strength. The majority of parents are satisfied with the standard of education the school provides and say their children enjoy school, a view endorsed by the students themselves. A significant minority of parents report difficulties in contacting the school.

Since the last inspection the school has been successful in improving the headline figure of 5 A* to C grades and have improved provision and outcomes in music and design technology. However, senior leaders have not secured improvements in standards at Key Stage 3 and in mathematics across the school of the magnitude or rapidity that could be reasonably expected since the time of the last inspection. Strategies to improve teaching and learning, a key focus of the school's work, have been limited in their impact. The satisfactory teaching delivers too few lessons where learning is good.

Overall standards are broadly average, although how well students achieve varies considerably between subjects and key stages. Whilst the school is encouraged by the outcomes of the first Year 8 entry to national tests in 2007, a more comprehensive evaluation will be required to judge the impact of new curriculum arrangements on raising standards between the ages of 11 and 14. By contrast, the Year 9 national test outcomes in 2007 were disappointing, as many students underachieved. At Key Stage 4, a wider choice of study pathways has provided a curriculum better matched to the needs of all students. This enables many of them to make up ground lost in the earlier key stage. By the age of 16 they achieve well in English. In mathematics however, this is not the case and the pattern of underachievement in the earlier key stage continues into GCSE. Weaknesses in numeracy skills restrict the choices available to some students in further education and training. Established links with other institutions have increased the range of work-related courses and the opportunities for progression post-16.

In other areas the school has made improvements, including a new purpose-built drama studio and better provision and outcomes for information and communication technology (ICT). The impact of the ICT specialism is evident across the wider curriculum in raising the profile of this medium to support learning. This contrasts with the limited impact of mathematics specialist status.

Self-evaluation shows that whilst senior leaders broadly know the school's strengths and weaknesses, they have been over-generous in judging the impact of work to improve students' achievements at age 14 and in mathematics at both key stages. Senior leaders have established a safe and caring environment in which students develop as confident young people with a clear sense of values. However, they have been less successful in addressing long-term weaknesses in academic outcomes through the setting and reaching of challenging targets.

Systems for monitoring classroom practice lack the rigour to identify and rectify shortcomings. Consequently practice varies too widely. The way school evaluates the effectiveness of actions for improvement identified in the development plan, makes it difficult for senior leaders to accurately gauge their impact. As was said at the last inspection, more could be done to share the good and very good practice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards attained by the age of 14.
- Raise standards in mathematics across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching to increase the proportion of lessons in which pupils make good or better progress.
- Increase the rigour of monitoring, and use the outcomes of this process more effectively, in order to raise expectations, achieve consistency of practice and meet challenging targets.
- Senior leaders need to evaluate more systematically the outcomes of actions taken to improve provision to ensure they have the intended impact.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Students enter the school with standards slightly above average. By the age of 16 overall standards are above average, although this headline figure masks considerable variation in achievement by key stage and subject. Between 2004 and 2006, 14-year-old students made inadequate progress in English, mathematics and science when judged against their attainment at age 11. Unvalidated test results for 2007 continue this pattern of underachievement. At Key Stage 4 many students make up ground lost in the earlier key stage. They do well in a number of subjects including English and some of the more recently introduced work related courses. The proportion of students gaining 5 A* to C grades has improved over the last three years and is above average. However, when English and mathematics are included this figure drops below average and declined in 2007, missing the school's target by a considerable margin. Good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures they make satisfactory progress.

In mathematics the pattern since the last inspection has been one of underachievement at both key stages. The proportion of lessons in which students make good progress is insufficient to raise standards substantially in mathematics.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and students' achievement in mathematics across the school were identified as areas for improvement at the last inspection.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good and are nurtured by the school's faith dimension. Most students enjoy coming to school. Attendance is above average and systems for following up unexplained absences are carefully maintained. Students behave well in and around school. They say they feel secure in school, know how to deal with instances of conflict or bullying and are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously. They especially appreciate the support offered by trained student mentors, and the positive influence of older students generally within the recently introduced house system. Membership of school and house councils, provide opportunities to make a significant contribution to the life of the

school community. Healthy living is promoted actively through improved school meals and opportunities to participate in sport and exercise. The carefully planned PSHE programme effectively covers sex and drugs education as well as promoting skills in citizenship and personal relationships. Students have strong awareness of their obligations to the wider community, for example, through their extensive charity fundraising activities. This contributes to developing their sense of responsibility.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whilst the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory the proportion that is good or better is not high enough to lead to good achievement or raise standards substantially. In a small number of lessons students make inadequate progress. The school's judgement of the quality of teaching and learning matches closely with that of inspectors. Throughout the school, classroom relationships are cordial and the majority of students are well disposed to learn.

In the most successful lessons expectations are high, pace is brisk and lively, and activities engage and sustain students' interest. Teachers regularly check progress towards learning objectives. They promote effective learning by ensuring the involvement of students in the assessment process. Students make good gains in these lessons. Many of the satisfactory lessons are characterised by a slower pace and work that is less well suited to students' varying abilities. In lessons where they are not encouraged to take responsibility for their learning, interest wanes. Lesson planning does not draw on available assessment information to prepare for and meet individual needs as well as it could. As a result, students are not sufficiently challenged. The use of marking as a means of providing guidance on how to improve work varies too widely. The impact of initiatives to improve teaching, learning, and assessment has been inconsistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has responded to inadequate progress at Key Stage 3 by introducing new arrangements. These condense the national curriculum into two years. Early signs are that this has benefited some students but for others a two year Key Stage 3 then beginning GCSE courses in Year 9 is not appropriate. The school is beginning to provide flexibility in the curriculum for these students. The better Key Stage 4 curriculum allows students to choose from a wide range of subjects including construction, motor vehicle, salon services and leisure and tourism. Many of these are offered through the well established links with other providers. Links with special schools allow their students to access the curriculum at St Bede's when appropriate. Older students appreciate the range of courses they are able to take. Progression routes are clearly established with a high proportion of students continuing their education after the age of 16. The school provides a broad and appropriate range of enrichment activities.

The information and communication technology (ICT) specialism is contributing to the whole school development of personalised learning. ICT developments have enabled St Bede's to support the community, including other schools, by providing ICT courses. The mathematics specialism is leading on the use of numeracy across the curriculum. However, the school acknowledges, and inspectors agree, that the impact of this is limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes its duty of care very seriously and child protection and health and safety procedures are well managed. Discussions with students revealed no worries about their personal safety, and some expressed their appreciation of the readiness of teachers to listen to their concerns. As a result, the school provides a well-ordered and a secure place for learning. Vulnerable students are well supported by the learning support team who provide effective support to the students and their parents as well as to their teachers. A strength of provision is the peer mentoring which gives students good access to someone to talk to if needed. Whilst pastoral support is good, academic support is less effective in ensuring all students reach the standards of which they are capable. Students' academic progress is not monitored consistently well by subject teachers and department heads. As a result not enough students are aware of their current progress towards target grades or what they need to do to achieve them. Older students are guided to courses which best suit their abilities and aptitude and benefit from careers advice.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory rather than good as the school judges, principally because the actions of senior leaders have not been robust enough to rectify weaknesses in students' academic progress identified at the last inspection.

Senior leaders have created a provision which ensures that the students' personal development and pastoral care are strengths. The outcomes of regular monitoring, particularly of teaching and learning, has not done enough to raise expectations or achieve consistency in the application of whole school policy. Strategies to share best practice and to coach, mentor and support staff are still evolving and are not driving improvement at the required pace. The commitment of middle managers requires more effective support and challenge if the school is to secure consistency in practice and measurable improvements in the proportion of lessons where learning is good. The dedication of governors is demonstrated through their regular contact and active involvement in the life of the school. They acknowledge that their strong support of the headteacher is not matched by the same degree of challenge on academic matters.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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
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	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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

9 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic School: A mathematics and computing college.

Thank you for making us welcome when we came to inspect your school. We were impressed by your good behaviour and manners. Those of you we talked to told us that you enjoy school and appreciate the hard work teachers and other adults in school do on your behalf. All members of your school community benefit from the mutual respect evident in relationships.

Mrs Travers and all the staff provide you with experiences and opportunities to ensure you leave St Bede's as confident young people with a strong sense of values. You benefit from access to specialist facilities that support your learning and the wide choice of courses at Key Stage 4 to suit all needs and interests.

Test and examination results at St Bede's vary quite considerably. Some students and subjects perform well, but this is not always the case. So, we have asked school to make some improvements by:

- Making sure you all achieve your potential at the end of Year 9 to prepare you well for Key Stage 4.
- Improving test and examination results in mathematics.
- Making sure that those good lessons you experience become more widespread and frequent.
- Ensuring that all your learning is managed and checked to the same high standard across the school.
- Asking senior leaders to ensure that all the actions taken to help you achieve to the best of your abilities make a difference.

We look forward to hearing of your progress.

Best wishes

Cathryn Kirby HMI

(On behalf of the inspection team)