

St Mary's Roman Catholic High School and Sports College, Brownedge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119784
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313423
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Angela Milner, 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	742
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Livesey
Headteacher	Mr Martin Reynolds
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Station Road Bamber Bridge Preston Lancashire PR5 6PB
Telephone number	01772 339813
Fax number	01772 629236

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Brownedge St Mary's is a comprehensive school situated in Bamber Bridge, near Preston. The school is smaller than average in size and draws its pupils from the surrounding areas of South Ribble. The majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is low compared with the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is greater than that in similar schools. The school gained Sports College status in September 2003. Since the last inspection a number of awards have been achieved by the school. These include: Partnership School, Football Charter Standard, the National Futsal Innovation Award for a new technique and fitness based five-a-side football game and a Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Brownedge St Mary's is a good school providing outstanding care, guidance and support for its pupils. The excellent care is reflected in the positive relationships which exist between teachers, support staff and pupils. This results in a harmonious school community where pupils are confident and can flourish. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well cared for. Pupils' personal development and well-being are also outstanding. Pupils develop very positive values that reflect the strong Catholic ethos that permeates all aspects of the school. This helps pupils to develop the skills and attributes appropriate for their adult life. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities make a good contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being.

Standards are improving at both Key Stages. Results in national tests improved in 2007 and are now slightly above average. While the majority of pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress overall, too many pupils do not attain the standards which they should in English and mathematics by the age of 16. Effective learning support ensures that lower attaining pupils achieve particularly well.

The vast majority of teaching is good and a small proportion is outstanding. Effective teaching, including imaginative use of information and communication technology (ICT), helps pupils make good progress in their learning. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to learn how to work independently. Independent learning skills are required for pupils to achieve high grades in coursework and examinations. The curriculum provides a good balance of academic and work-related courses. Work-related learning opportunities and effective careers guidance prepare pupils well for their life beyond school. Sports college status permeates the life of the school and has been used very effectively to move the school forward. All pupils take part in some form of sport or health-related activity. Sports college status has provided opportunities for pupils to develop their own leadership skills within the school and the local community.

The headteacher and senior staff provide good leadership and management of the school. They are well supported by middle leaders who are playing a key role in raising achievement and standards. The governing body effectively holds the school to account. Systematic self-evaluation and good use of data mean the school can identify its strengths and the areas it needs to improve. Development plans focus securely on raising standards and improving the learning environment for pupils. The school has dealt well with the issues raised in the last inspection report. Senior leaders have a clear vision for the future of the school and there is good capacity at all management levels to bring this about.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics at GCSE.
- Extend the opportunities for pupils to learn independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Good teaching, a curriculum well matched to pupils needs and positive attitudes to lessons enable the majority of pupils to make good progress in their learning.

Standards achieved at Key Stages 3 and 4 are improving although there is variation in pupils' performance between subjects and over time. At Key Stage 3, there was a significant

improvement in English results in 2007 and also improvement in mathematics and science results. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more good passes at GCSE has improved steadily and is now above average. However, the proportion of pupils gaining good passes including English and mathematics should be higher. Students performed particularly well in English Literature, German and applied physical education at GCSE level. The school has set and achieved its challenging targets, including those for its specialist status.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because the school provides a rich range of experiences to support pupils' development. Pupils develop very positive values which underpin their views on life and reflect the strong Catholic ethos that permeates all aspects of the school. Pupils and parents appreciate the support teachers provide and the high quality relationships that exist between pupils and teachers. These relationships contribute to the positive teaching, learning and achievement ethos within the school. Pupils are motivated and want to learn. The school encourages pupils to show great care and concern for each other. For example, older pupils support younger pupils through their role as peer mediators. Pupils also demonstrate their care and compassion for others through their involvement in a range of charitable activities and events.

Pupils are proud of their school and feel part of a caring and inclusive community. Attitudes to learning, behaviour and attendance are good. The school is doing all it can to ensure that pupils and their families realise the importance of attending school. Pupils make a good contribution to school life through their roles as prefects and games captains and through their membership of the school council and learning forums. They demonstrate an outstanding willingness to take on responsibilities and practice their leadership skills. This enhances their personal development and helps pupils to develop the personal qualities required for their future lives.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' awareness of other cultures is well developed through the curriculum and through participation in a very good range of extra-curricular activities. This includes visits abroad and charity work with the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development. Pupils feel safe at school. They and their parents confirm that when occasional incidences of bullying take place they are dealt with effectively. Healthy lifestyles are well promoted and all pupils participate in a range of highly valued sporting activities. The careers programme and work experience placements contribute well to pupils' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The vast majority of teaching and learning is good and in a small proportion of lessons it is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge which gives them confidence in the delivery of lessons. In good lessons a variety of well-planned and paced activities ensures that pupils are challenged and make good progress in their learning. Relationships are exemplary and behaviour is very well managed so that there are very few disruptions to learning. In a minority of lessons, where teaching lacks pace and focus, pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress. In some lessons there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn independently.

Teachers work enthusiastically to develop their expertise further and use ICT very well to support teaching and learning. Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons and help ensure that the majority of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress

Assessment is thorough and pupils' progress is closely monitored and analysed. As a result any underachievement is quickly identified and effective steps are taken to address it. Regular homework helps pupils to consolidate their learning. The marking of work does not always show pupils how well they are doing and how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and fulfils statutory requirements. It meets pupils' needs and aspirations well and motivates them to achieve. At Key Stage 4 the school offers a good range of academic and work-related courses. Some of these courses are taught in school and some in partnership with local colleges.

The school's specialist status as a sports college has led to a number of innovative developments that are impacting positively on the breadth and quality of the curriculum offered to pupils. For example, through the introduction of applied GCSE physical education courses.

The school provides an extensive range of well-supported and valued extra-curricular activities. The take-up rates are exceptionally high with, for example, all pupils being involved in sport and health-related activities. These activities complement the curriculum and contribute significantly to pupils' personal development. For example, older pupils act as coaches and mentors for sporting activities in local primary schools. All pupils are well prepared to enter the world of work through effective work experience placements in Year 10.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Pupils throughout are exceptionally well cared for by a highly committed staff. Pupils' academic progress is closely monitored by teachers and managers who make very effective use of assessment data to identify pupils who may be at risk of underachievement. Effective actions are taken to remedy this underachievement, for example, through a Year 11 mentoring programme designed to raise standards in GCSE examinations.

Safeguarding, child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place and are exceptionally well managed. The welfare of pupils lies at the heart of the school's work. All pupils know of someone they can turn to if they need support. The school is an inclusive school and works hard to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported. Their progress is carefully monitored and individual action plans are used extremely well to ensure pupils make good progress in their learning. Effective liaison takes place with parents and a number of external agencies involved in supporting pupils with a range of complex needs.

Year leaders and form tutors support pupils effectively. There are very good systems in place to guide pupils at key times in their education. For example, close partnerships with primary schools ensure the smooth transition of pupils into Year 7. Pupils are guided in school to courses in Key Stage 4 which best suit their abilities and aptitudes and there is a comprehensive

programme of careers advice. The school works in partnership with a range of local businesses and educational institutions to provide high quality support and advice about education and training opportunities and employment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management at all levels is good. The school is well led and managed by a headteacher and leadership team who provide a clear vision for this inclusive and caring school. Staff feel supported and valued. Middle leaders are playing a key role in raising achievement and standards through their subject leadership and accurate monitoring of data. Effective systems of self-evaluation and the setting of clear targets for development mean that the school knows what has been achieved and what it can do to improve further. Systematic improvement planning ensures that resources are deployed effectively to focus on raising standards and improving the school's learning environment. Improvements seen in accommodation and resources, the quality of teaching and learning and the progress made by most pupils are a direct result of this effective leadership. This positive focus on improving the school and raising achievement is shared by the whole school community.

The school's specialist status as a sports college enhances the learning environment and the availability of ICT resources and makes a considerable impact on the life of the school and the personal development and well-being of its pupils.

Parents are generally supportive of the school. They value the care, support and guidance it provides and comment favourably on the improvements they have seen in the school over the last three years.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and a safe, secure and caring learning atmosphere, in line with the school's Catholic ethos, has been created. The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and effectively holds the school's senior leaders to account for its performance. The school has successfully addressed all points for improvement from the last inspection report and clearly demonstrates good value for money.

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	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	2
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic High School and Sports College, Brownedge, Lancashire,
PR5 6PB

Thank you for the contribution you made to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed visiting your school and talking with many of you. We also read carefully the questionnaires completed by your parents.

We think that that there are many good things about your school and that it is providing you with high quality education and care. There are excellent relationships between yourselves and members of staff in the school. The staff take good care of you.

Your behaviour is good, you enjoy your time in school and make good progress in your learning. You are well taught and the school provides opportunities for you to develop as citizens and become prepared for your life beyond school. Many of you take advantage of the opportunities provided by the school's specialist status as a sports college to engage in a wide range of activities within and beyond the school. We were particularly impressed by the way you have helped to improve the school through the school council and the learning forums. The head, staff and governors are working hard to raise standards and improve the school even further.

Whilst we judged your school to be good there are two areas we have asked the school to improve further. We would like school to:

- ensure more of you gain grade C or above in English and mathematics at GCSE
- develop your skills as independent learners so that you are better able to take responsibility for your own learning.

You can of course help to improve your school by continuing to work as

hard as you can to achieve your best especially in tests and examinations and by continuing to share your views about the school with the staff.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and we would like to wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Angela Milner HMI