

# St Bede's Catholic High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119788
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	313425
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Leszek Iwaskow 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>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	714
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Bill Drake
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Philip Grice
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Talbot Road Lytham St Annes Lancashire FY8 4JL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01253 737174
<b>Fax number</b>	01253 731243

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## Introduction

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

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the personal development and well-being of students; the quality of teaching, learning and the quality of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes, departmental self-evaluation, observation of the school at work, interviews with students and management, and parental questionnaires, as well as information on the school's website. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments as given in the self-evaluation were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

St Bede's Catholic High School is a smaller-than-average comprehensive school. The school is popular and is oversubscribed. It gained business and enterprise specialist status in 2005. The school serves an area that is relatively advantaged but the intake includes students from a diverse range of backgrounds. Students enter the school with above average attainment. The proportion entitled to free school meals is almost half the national average. There are few from minority ethnic backgrounds or at the early stages of learning English. Attendance is above average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. However, the proportion with a statement of special educational need is above average. The school holds the Sports Mark and Healthy Schools awards.

## 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 with several outstanding features. It is considered by parents and students alike as a 'very special place with a committed and dedicated staff'. The students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school is a warm welcoming place and there is a real sense of belonging. This is supported by the strong Catholic ethos and the focus on care for each other and a clear moral code. Students commented that they felt part of a large family and this was emphasised by the way they helped and supported each other. They enjoy coming to school and they constantly remarked how 'things are really getting better' and 'we can see that the changes being made by the teachers are really making a difference'. Previously behaviour overall was good, although a small minority of students were causing concern. Now it is outstanding and reflects the positive and immediate impact of the recently initiated policy on behaviour for learning. There are high expectations for both behaviour and appearance. Clear rewards and sanctions, which are known and understood by all, are consistently applied. There has been an immediate impact which has helped to make the school a calm and secure environment for learning to take place. Students are unanimous in their praise. Those students who have misbehaved in the past are aware of the clear parameters and are happy to conform. One student even remarked proudly that, 'I was always in trouble and had even been excluded but now I know where I stand and I'm actually working and getting better grades. I now know I can succeed.' Teachers have also noticed the improved behaviour and the improved atmosphere for learning in the classroom. Some parents have expressed concerns that this policy has become 'draconian' – but it is working for most students, who are comfortable with its impact on their learning and well-being.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Assemblies and Mass are used regularly to provide opportunities for reflection. Students are aware of the need to eat healthily, although many rue the fact they can no longer purchase 'Fairtrade' chocolate and express concern about the impact of such sanctions on the lives of cocoa farmers in Africa. They are proud of their sporting achievements despite the lack of adequate facilities, particularly a sports hall. However, this does not deter them from winning at football and netball and, but for the intervention of a summer 'monsoon', they may have achieved cricketing success. They play a valued role in the community and organise and support many fundraising and charity events. The enterprise culture is strong and there are many budding entrepreneurs who become immersed in Young Enterprise, 'Fairtrade' and other events which are intended to test their ingenuity and business prowess. Many are involved in the wide range of enrichment activities offered, though the boys remain reluctant to join the choir. All this helps to develop the students' self-confidence, boost their self-esteem and prepare them well for the next stages in their education or for entry into the world of work.

Good teaching in most subjects and an improved curriculum enable the greater majority of students to make good progress and achieve well. Inspectors agree with the school that both standards and achievement are at least good in the majority of subjects, especially in English, mathematics and science. Students show preference for lessons where they can develop practical skills. They enjoy opportunities to work collaboratively and have noticed how the improved use of computer technology is enlivening many lessons. In the best lessons teachers use their very good subject knowledge to engage students' thinking and support this with relevant and enjoyable practical activities. In a small minority of classes there remains a tendency to lecture to, rather than enthuse, students and there is an over-reliance on worksheets which occupy

students rather than challenge their inquisitiveness. Marking and assessment are improving but are not yet consistent across the school. Also parents remain concerned about the frequency and quality of homework in some subjects.

Care and support are central to what the school does well. Child protection procedures and policies are in place. Health and safety are also given due care and attention. Students feel safe and well cared for. Monitoring, target-setting and assessment procedures are established and the majority of subjects are making good use of data to identify those students experiencing difficulties. The school acknowledges that more needs to be done to ensure greater consistency and better impact on the outcomes for students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage, make good progress and achieve well. Those students at risk of failing are also well supported by the pastoral system and mentoring procedures. However, insufficient use is being made of the wider range of strategies to support those students who need that little extra help.

The school is undergoing a period of change. The recently appointed headteacher has re-energised planning, restructured responsibilities and is providing excellent leadership. He has a clear vision of where the school is going and is very well supported by a very effective senior leadership team. The development plan clearly identifies those areas which will have most impact on raising standards and achievement even further and will improve the quality of provision. Students comment positively about the greater visibility and approachability of senior managers and teachers on a day-to-day basis. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and the focus on middle managers reviewing and developing their subject areas is having a beneficial impact in the majority of cases. Some outstanding subject leaders are rising to these new opportunities and challenges and are intent on improving provision even further. However, this is not yet consistent across the school and a small minority have failed to identify weaknesses effectively or challenge poorer practice. There is strong evidence that the school has excellent capacity for further improvement. The way in which management has tackled weaknesses and supported improvements in music is testimony to this. Equally, the rapid and beneficial impact of the new behaviour policy on improving the learning environment provides very good evidence of what can be achieved in a very short time, given clear direction and concerted effort. The business and enterprise status is having a good impact on shaping the character of the school and developing good workplace skills among the students. This provision is further being enhanced by the new business and enterprise centre, of which students are rightly proud. Inspectors agree that leadership and management are good overall. Parents, students and teachers have much to be proud of and an exciting future to look forward to.

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

- Ensure that marking is regular, constructive and informative across all subjects.
- Ensure that homework is relevant and of a consistently high standard.
- Make certain that, in those few areas where some weaknesses have been identified, subject leaders tackle these effectively to ensure provision is at least good.

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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	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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?	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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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
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?	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
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



## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic High School, Lancashire, FY8 4JL

We enjoyed visiting your school recently and would like to thank you for all your help. You are very proud of your school and are very supportive and appreciative of the way Mr Grice and your teachers are working hard to make your time at the school an enjoyable and successful experience. We were very impressed with your maturity, politeness and good humour, as well as the confident way you were able to articulate your views and opinions. You provided us with a great deal of useful information about the school and helped us come to the conclusion that St Bede's Catholic High School is a successful school which provides you with a good standard of education.

You clearly enjoy coming to school and are particularly appreciative of the very caring, safe and close community environment that the school provides. The greater majority of you are pleased with the changes that are being made to make your time at the school a rewarding and happy experience. You are unanimous about the success of the new behaviour policy and comment about how it has made the school a calmer place. You now take greater pride in your appearance and are able to concentrate on learning better. You are proud of your achievements, whether they are in the classroom, on the sports field, singing for the choir, conquering that difficult note on your musical instrument or in the many enterprising initiatives you become involved in.

You particularly enjoy those lessons which are practical, challenging and allow you to share your skills and talents by working collaboratively. Over the coming months your teachers will be working hard to inform you how to improve your work. They intend to make sure you get relevant and regular homework and that your lessons will become even more enjoyable and worthwhile. For your part you must continue to work hard, get your coursework in on time and continue to participate actively in class.

Many of you said you will be sad to leave the school when you reach 16; it shows that the school is a 'special' place for you. Many of you have high aspirations and want to go onto further studies and eventually university. You shared your dreams of scoring that winning goal at Wembley, playing for the Halle orchestra or simply doing well in your chosen career. I am sure that with this good start in life, most of you will succeed.

On behalf of my team, I wish you every success in the future. God bless.

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector