

Blessed Trinity RC College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134997
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	316301
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Chambers 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	1386
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Brian Kealey
Headteacher	Ms Bernadette Bleasdale
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Coal Clough Lane Ormerod Road Burnley Lancashire BB11 5BT
Telephone number	01282 436 314
Fax number	01282 832 198

Age group	11-16
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2008
Inspection number	316301

© Crown copyright 2008

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Blessed Trinity RC College is a large school, serving mainly the Roman Catholic communities of Burnley, Padiham and Todmorden. The school serves an area with social and economic characteristics that are generally below average, but the proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is in line with national averages. There are slightly more girls than boys on roll. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low, but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is above average. About 95% of the pupils are of White British heritage. The school has specialist status in sports and humanities, and holds the Artsmark, Sportsmark and Healthy Schools awards.

Blessed Trinity was formed from the pupil populations of St Theodore's and St Hilda's Roman Catholic High Schools, and opened in 2006 as part of Lancashire's Building Schools for the Future programme. It currently operates on two sites about 4 miles apart, with all Year 7 and 8 pupils and girls in Years 9 to 11 taught on the previous St Hilda's site and boys in Years 9 to 11 taught on the previous St Theodore's site. Transitional accommodation arrangements are due to continue until 2010, when the school moves to a new single-site building.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Blessed Trinity is a good school where pupils achieve well because of the good teaching that they receive and the strong guidance that the school provides. From standards on entry that are close to national averages, pupils make good gains in their learning, especially in Key Stage 3, and achieve results in national tests and GCSE examinations that are above average. Achievement is particularly impressive in English, where consistently good or outstanding teaching helps pupils to make considerably more progress than similar pupils in other schools. Standards are above average overall, although there is more variation between different subject areas than would be normally expected. Parents are supportive of the school. The large number of inspection questionnaires that were returned showed that parents were overwhelmingly positive in their views. One comment that 'we are very happy with every aspect of Blessed Trinity's schooling and would recommend it to anyone' was typical.

Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, the school has developed a strong sense of common purpose in a relatively short time. Difficult transition arrangements, involving pupils being taught on two separate sites, have been well managed and, as a result, disruption has been kept to a minimum and pupils' learning has not suffered. Governors are well informed, supportive and provide the school with suitable challenge. The school's high expectations, a relentless focus on improving pupils' learning and an appropriate curriculum have been effective in closing the gap between girls' and boys' achievement and have raised overall standards. The school demonstrates good capacity to improve. Because of its effective programme of monitoring and evaluation, the school knows itself well. Leaders have accurately identified where the school needs to develop and have well-laid plans to effect further improvements. The school's specialist status has had a positive impact particularly in broadening curricular provision.

The standard of teaching is good. Teachers plan their lessons with a focus on promoting effective learning; they employ a range of effective techniques to engage pupils' interest and are willing to try out new ideas. Pupils benefit from opportunities to assess their own work and that of others. Where academic support and marking are most effective, pupils are given clear guidance on how they could improve their work, but this is not yet applied consistently across the school. A good and developing curriculum makes a strong contribution to the effectiveness of the school. The balance of academic and vocational options is matched well to pupils' needs.

The school's Catholic ethos underpins the pupils' good personal development. Pupils behave well, respect the school environment and support each other. Many take advantage of the good range of extra-curricular activities; many also make positive contributions to the school and the community through taking positions of responsibility or helping out at school events. Pupils say that they enjoy school. The vast majority show good attitudes to learning and want to do well. They demonstrate this by taking advantage of the support that is offered, for example by attending revision classes after school. A small minority of pupils can be passive in their approach to learning at times when teaching lacks direction or challenge. Attendance is above the national average and the school has set an ambitious target to improve it further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make pupils more aware of how to improve their work, including thorough marking.
- Raise standards and achievement across the school to match those in the best subject areas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. In 2007, results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were above average overall in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Similarly, the GCSE results were above average, although the proportion of pupils with five good GCSEs including English and mathematics or equivalent was in line with national averages. School data, GCSE module results and standards seen during the inspection confirm that standards remain above average, although a small minority of subjects perform less well.

Pupils achieve well. They enter the school with attainment that is in line with national expectations for their age, and make better progress than similar pupils in most other schools. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them to achieve in line with other groups. Pupils make outstanding progress in English. In 2007, the school met its challenging targets in English and mathematics, but not in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development and well-being are demonstrated by positive attitudes to learning and strong relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils are polite, friendly and confident young people. Behaviour around school and in lessons is good. Occasional lapses, as recognised by both the school and parents, are managed well. Attendance is above the national average and improving. Pupils say that they feel safe in school, knowing that incidents of bullying will be dealt with quickly and effectively. They show a good understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles, such as partaking in regular physical activity. Most eat healthily and act upon the extensive health-related advice that they receive in food technology lessons. Pupils say that they enjoy school, and demonstrate it by taking full advantage of the extra-curricular and enrichment activities on offer. They can take on responsibility by serving on the school council, acting as prefects or mentors, and organising fundraising events for charity. A well-planned work experience programme, vocational courses, enterprise activities and a range of work-related initiatives help pupils to develop a wide range of skills and qualities required for adult working life. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with spiritual development being particularly strong.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has a strong focus on promoting effective learning, and as a result pupils make good progress in lessons. Lesson planning demonstrates how teachers have responded positively to recent training and integrated new ideas into their teaching. Teachers select tasks that engage pupils' interests and hence make the learning more enjoyable. Pupils work well independently and in small groups and are keen to support and help each other to make progress. Because of the strong relationships between teachers and pupils, pupils feel able to ask questions and clarify their understanding in a supportive environment. This positive classroom atmosphere contributes to pupils' good attitudes to work. In the best lessons, pupils assess their own and others' work, judging it against criteria for different levels or grades. The best examples of

marking reinforce this, but some marking offers only limited opportunities for pupils to respond to advice and improve their work.

Teachers' reflective attitudes have helped to create a learning community where professional development is valued. Good practice in teaching and learning is identified and shared regularly within and between departments. For example, teachers have evaluated different ways of introducing a lesson's intended learning outcomes so that they are more easily understood by pupils. Through these and other measures, the school is working hard to improve the satisfactory teaching and to eliminate the very small amount of inadequate teaching that exists.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The well-balanced curriculum has developed effectively to include opportunities for broader and deeper study, and as a result, it is now tailored well to meet the needs of all pupils. Provision at Key Stage 3 is enhanced by the opportunity for some pupils to enter national tests in English a year early. A growing range of options at Key Stage 4 includes AS level courses in Government and Politics and Science for Public Understanding, together with vocational subjects such as GCSE Health and Social Care. The suitability of these courses is demonstrated by the fact that they are increasingly popular. Despite difficult accommodation arrangements, with boys and girls in Key Stage 4 based on separate sites, the same subject options are available to all, and pupils' choices and attitudes demonstrate that the school has been successful in breaking down a number of gender stereotypes. Specialist status has enabled the school to expand effectively the range of courses and facilities available.

Provision is enriched with a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities which are popular with pupils. Good links with the community, local colleges and businesses enhance pupils' learning experiences and personal development. Careers education, enterprise education and work experiences are well planned and ensure pupils are well informed about their options when they leave school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's strong emphasis on meeting pupils' personal and academic needs ensures that care, guidance and support are good. Elements of pastoral support, particularly for the most vulnerable, are outstanding. Pupils speak highly of the support that they receive: one pupil stated, 'there is always someone to turn to when in need'. All appropriate procedures for safeguarding pupils' safety and well-being are in place. Effective school policies have contributed to above average attendance and a very low level of exclusions. Strong and effective partnerships with a range of outside agencies enhance provision effectively. Good guidance on options choices helps pupils make informed choices about their future pathways. Strong links with partner institutions and primary schools help to smooth the transitions between different stages of education. Systems for tracking pupils' academic progress are effective. Where pupils are identified as underachieving, the school provides appropriate support to raise standards. Most pupils know their personal target levels or grades but not all understand, other than in general terms, how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management, together with the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, have ensured that the school has kept a robust focus on achievement and pupils' learning during a very challenging period. Transition arrangements, including bringing together pupils from two different schools and overseeing the plans for a new building, have been very effectively managed, resulting in the minimum disruption to pupils' learning and well-being. Resources are well managed and the school's two sites both provide welcoming, clean and attractive learning environments. A strong Catholic ethos and elements of outstanding pastoral care have been secured while achievement and standards are improving. However, a small number of ongoing staffing difficulties, which are not yet fully resolved, are holding back achievement in some subject areas. The headteacher is well supported by an enthusiastic and effective leadership team. The quality of middle management is satisfactory overall. There are several strong managers; the few who are less effective have been appropriately identified and are receiving good support to develop their skills. Pupils are set challenging targets which reflect the schools' high aspirations. The school is aware that data analysis and the monitoring of pupils' achievement over time could be developed further. The school's specialist status has been effective in broadening the curriculum, and in 2007 the school met its targets for examination results in the specialist subjects. Expertise and good practice arising from the specialisms are beginning to be shared with other subject areas, although it is too early to evaluate the impact of this.

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

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	NA
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	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	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

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Blessed Trinity RC College, Lancashire, BB11 5BT

You will recall that a team of inspectors and I visited your school recently to judge the standard of education that it provides. We enjoyed our visit and were pleased that so many of you were willing to tell us your views. A very large number of parents and carers sent in responses to the questionnaire and their views were also very helpful to us.

We judged Blessed Trinity to be a good school. You achieve well there because of the good teaching that you receive and the strong guidance that the school provides. A wide range of subjects is available for you to study. You behave well, respect the school environment and support each other. Many of you take advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular activities. In addition, many of you make positive contributions to the school and the community through taking positions of responsibility or helping out at school events. You told us that you enjoy school. You show positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. You demonstrate this by taking advantage of the good support that is offered, for example by attending revision classes after school.

Under Miss Bleasdale's excellent leadership, your school has improved significantly in the short time that it has been open. In order to improve the school further, I have asked her and the team to:

- help you to be more aware of how to improve your work, including through marking
- raise standards and achievement across the school to match those in the best subject areas.

You can play your part in this by continuing to attend regularly, and responding to the advice from teachers about how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Paul Chambers

Her Majesty's Inspector